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November - December 1997

Hot Spring

A Journal of Commitment

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Hot Spring
A Journal of commitment

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Editor
S.Sivanayagam

HOT SPRING
P.O.Box 14258
London
SW16 6ZU
UK

Fax: + 44 (0) 181 696 7761

e-mail:
editor.hotspring@virgin.net

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Comment

OLD ENEMIES, NEW CONVERTS ?

What have former Indian Foreign Secretary Jyotindra Nath Dixit, TULF widow Sarojini Yogeswaran and PLOTE political chief Dharmalingam Siddharthan have in common ?

Difficult to say, is it not ? One could for example, say - going by past history - that each of them should be having a good reason to share a common dislike for LTTE leader Prabhakaran. But no. That is precisely what it does not seem to be. Says Dixit (in his recent book) "The man (Prabhakaran) has an inner fire". "He is passionately committed to the cause of Tamil liberation". He is "endowed with natural military abilities "A keen observer of the nature of competitive and critical politics".

Is Dixit talking about the man whom the Indian army fought in vain, and who is still in his country's wanted list ?

Take Mrs.Yogeswaran. Can you see the trace of nostalgia in the way she recalls the LTTE leader ? (Page 19) "He visited our home in Jaffna wearing bell bottoms and looking spruced up and smart". "His wife is very pretty". Is she not talking about the same man who is accused of being responsible for the murder of her husband ?

What does Siddharthan say? "Although we are in opposing camps, I respect him". (Interview, THE ISLAND, Dec.7 '97) Isn't he talking about a political enemy who had a shoot-out with his own late leader Uma Maheswaran in Pondy Bazaar in Chennai, 15 years ago ?

All this bemuses us. Time could be a great soother.Wisdom too could dawn with the passage of time. Next, we are eagerly waiting for General Ratwatte to shake hands with the LTTE supremo after signing the surrender agreement!

S.S

An apology to our readers

The issues of HOT SPRING for the months of November and December 1997 could not be brought out in time due to a combination of unfortunate circumstances over which we had absolutely no control While asking the indulgence of our readers, we now give you, though belatedly - a combined November-December issue with an extra 8 pages in colour. In the next issue we will be combining the months of January and February 1998, to help us catch up on the monthly deadlines. Subscribers are however assured that even when we merge two months into one issue, an annual subscription will entitle them to twelve issues of the journal.

“What They Say ”

"The basic problem with us, as a nation, we overeat. As a result our productivity is the lowest in the region...It is astounding that in Sri Lanka, the per capita consumption of sugar is 32 kilos, wheat flour is 44 kilos, rice is 102 kilos, which are among the highest in the world".

- Sri Lankan Trade Minister Kingsley Wicremaratne, speaking in the Sri Lankan Parliament on November 28, '97.

*****

"Sex and sleaze come together every week, and this is turning out to be a government of the corrupt, by the corrupt and for the corrupt.... You have not given the country peace, you have not given it development: you have given it only corruption. That is the track record of the PA government for the last three years".

. - Opposition leader Ranil Wickremasinghe, speaking in the Sri Lankan Parliament

*****

"Although I appreciate your apology,I remain highly dissatisfied with AirLanka's performance, not only for the loss of my luggage but for its half -hearted and belated response to my situation"

- The South Asia correspondent of THE GUARDIAN, London, Suzanne Goldenberg who lost her luggage with items worth £3,011/-on her visit to Sri Lanka. (SUNDAY LEADER, Nov.23, '97)

*****

"When I began, I had no assets. The only asset was my name as a fair and independent editor.. Whenever I was wrong I never feared to carry a correction but when I was right, I fought for it tooth and nail".

- Vijitha Yapa, a well-known journalist one-time and founder -editor of THE ISLAND which he quit when he found that his editorial independence was threatened. He is now the owner of a leading bookshop in Colombo.

*****

"I've never seen piatures of dead child soldiers. The only evidence of women soldiers comes from the Tigers, and their pictures are of girls in their late teens at least - the age of Sri Lankan recruits"

- one of the diplomats in Colombo, skeptical of the government claim that the LTTE are throwing "Schoolgirls into the action", quoted by Tony Clifton in NEWSWEEK of December 8, '97.

*****

"If a plane goes down everybody makes a big haho - but that's all part of the war. We have lost tanks in the war - in Jayasikuru we had several losses. Ships and boats have been sunk. Why are they concerned only about aircraft going down ? ...... When you are fighting a war you have to lose equipment...How do you expect to fight a war without losing equipment. The enemy is notnot going to just keep quiet. If the enemy was not capable of destroying our aircraft, tanks and boats we won't have a war

- Sri Lankan Deputy Defence Minister, "General" Anuruddha Ratwatte replying to media criticism in an interview with the government-controlled SUNDAY OBSERVER, Nov. 30, '97.

*****

“We”re not getting the recruitment (to the army) we would expect to. At some stage there was no other source of employment.........”

- General Ratwatte

*****

International

"Winnie is a murderer. What can a murderer do for our country ?"

- Johannesburg woman on Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, accused of several apartheid-era murders and abductions.

"Whether she killed people or not, she was fighting for the rights of our people ".

- Johannesburg nurse Jemina Litabe.

*****

"I am afraid this country (India) is not fit for democracy.

If this is democracy, let it perish....A strong man should take over. We need discipline more than freedom".

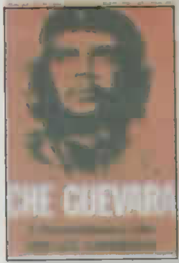
-Eminent Indian jurist and former ambassador to U.S. Nani Palkhivala in an interview with THE WEEK, India, Dec.14, '97.

*****

"A lot of Russian men are lazy and (need to be) treated like children I treated my first husband like a child. I really thought that if I didn't take care of him, he wouldn't be able to survive on his own"

- Natalya Dyakonova, a former newspaper journalist now the president of a high-powered public relations agency. NEWSWEEK interviews, Dec.8 , '97

*****



"He (Che Guevera) is more alive than before"

Cuban leader Fidel Castro after Che's remains were brought to Cuba recently.

*****

"Soniaji (Sonia Gandhi) is as much or more Indian than I or Advaniji (BJP leader Advani.

- Congress president Sitaram Kesri.

Defiance at Delhi

International Conve n for Solidarity
the Ee of Sri Lanka

The "International Convention for Solidarity with the Eelam Tamils of Sri Lanka" was scheduled to be held at the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) auditorium in New Delhi on 14 December, 1997. Delegates from foreign countries as well as from other Indian states were to be present at the one-day convention.But two days before the meet was to take place Samata Party leader George Fernandes, the convener of the meet was informed by the Delhi Police that permission to hold the conference would not be given.

The Delhi Police had also warned the FICCI authorities that it should not allow the "misuse" of its premises for "anti-national activity".

But George Fernandes was not perturbed. He held a Press Conferenc on 12 December and announced that the convention would take place,ban or no ban. "FERNANDES MAY FACE ARREST" said a headline in one newspaper. Because of the government ban, the convention proceedings got more publicity in all the newspapers two days later. A beaming Mrs.Jeya Jetley,the organising secretary of the Samata Party publicly thanked Indian Home Minister Indrajit Gupta and the Indian government for creating tremendous Press interest in the convention by banning it !

George Fernandes defies Indian govt. ban on Eelam Tamil meet

The HINDUSTAN TIMES in its issue of 13 December carried the headline: GOVT.,SAMATA LOCK HORNS OVER LANKAN TAMIL MEET, and said : "The international convention on Sri Lankan Tamils is poised to become a major bone of contention between the Governmen and Sanata Party......

"Pointing a finger at "10 Janpath" for the proposed ban, he (Fernandes) says if it is enforced, the Government of India would be going against the Constitutional Right to Freedom of Expression.

"We have an opinion as to what happens in Sri Lanka and it cannot be tailored to the requirements of a family. Government can have different opinion if it does not suit the Government or its proxy owners", he stated.

The HINDUSTAN TIMES report said: "Day before yesterday, in a letter marked "secret/most immediate", Union Home Minister Inderjit Gupta had requested Mr.Fernandes to "reconsider" the decision to hold and participate in the Convention.

He pointed out in his letter that LTTE leadership based abroad were trying to "re-activate" their support base in Tamil Nadu in the aftermath of the US decision to declare the LTTE a "terrorist organisation". With this objective in view and at the "behest" of LTTE leadership, the conference was being organised"

"The Home Minister said "reports" received in this regard also indicated that "funds for the purpose are being channelised from the US and Australia-based LTTE leaders, through Mr.Nedumaran.

"Mr.Fernandes, at the time of releasing copies of the letter to correspondents, had Mr.Nedumaran by his side.

"Mr.Fernandes, who strongly reacted to the contents of the letter said it was

(continued overleaf)

Defiance at Delhi

being made out that he was either "an overground operator for underground LTTE or being a nitwit".

"He said he had been to almost every convention held on the Tamil question as a "human rights activist" since 1983 in India and abroad.... Justice Krishna Iyer had been also attending most such conventions and only three days ago had gone to attend such a conference in Geneva...

According to a report in THE STATESMAN, New Delhi, "The Samata Party leader also said that the First Secretary of the Sri Lanka High Commission had contacted them and expressed interest in attending the conference because of the nature of issues being discussed and a member of Parliament from Sri Lanka, Mr.J.Pararajasingam had already confirmed his participation.".

With the Delhi Police deciding that discretion was the better part of valour the Convention was held as scheduled, but of course in a different venue - at the spacious lawns of 3, Krishna Menon Marg, the official government bungalow allotted to Mr.Fernandes as a member of the dissolved Lok Sabha.

Among the participants at the Convention were Malcolm R.Gracie of Amnesty International, Australia, Gillies Piquois, Member, International Commission of Jurists, France, Joseph Pararajasingam, Member of Sri Lankan Parliament, A.P.Venkateswaran, former Foreign Secretary of the Indian Government, K.Veeramani, General Secretary, Dravidar Kazhagam, Maj Gen.(rerd) Ashok Mehta, K.V.Ponnaiyan of the Tamil Nadu Marxist-Leninist Party, Dr.S. Sathananthan, Secretary Action Group of Tamils in Colombo (AGOTIC) and Pala Nedumaran of the Tamils' National Movement. and Dr.T.R.Janarthanan of the World's Tamil Forum. Scholar and political commentator Adrian Wijemanne sent a supportive message to the Convention which was read out by Samata Party Secretary Jeya Jetley.

International Convention
with the Eelam Tamils

Indian indifference is shameful - Fernandes

Speaking at a Press Conference held on the eve of the Convention, Mr.Fernandes criticized the ruling class of India for their indifference to the plight of the Eelam Tamils. "It is shameful that the Indian government does not have a word to say against the fate of the Tamils who are at the receiving end of Statesponsored terror by the Sinhala army in Sri Lanka... There are very powerful groups in this country who would not care at all about the Tamils, and they treat Tamils as second-class citizens"

"Fifty five million Tamils in Tamil Nadu are watching the indifference of the central government towarfds their brothers and sisters in Sri Lanka, and they will teach a lesson at the next general elections", Mr.Fernandes said.

Rape cases involving govt. forces on the increase - Sri Lanka M.P.

Inaugurating the convention, Tamil M.P. in the Sri Lankan Parliament Joseph Pararajasingam said that human rights violation had increased considerably in the war zone in the northeast during the current phase of the war. Citing a check-list of such volations, especially against women, he said that there had been a minimum of 60 rape cases involving the government "security forces" personnel in his parliamentary constituency of Batticaloa this year.

Human rights violations , he said, included killing of innocent Tamils, assault on children and women, illegal detentions, torture and aerial bombing of predominantly Tamil areas.

According to the report in the HINDUSTAN TIMES of 15 December, "Two of his comments drew instant applause from the audience. The first one was that India could not remain a silent spectator and that it must play its legitimate role in finding a political settlement to end the conflict. And the second was that without the LTTE's participation, no restoration of peace and return of normalcy was possible.' He quoted the Amnesty International's concluding summary

Australian delegate turned back

An Australian Human Rights activist, Mr.Yohan Myles who arrived in Delhi on 14 December to attend the conference was detained at the Delhi airport by the Immigration authorities.

Mr.Myles had a valid visa to enter the country, but he was not told the grounds on which he was denied entry. After a 10-hour wait at the airport, he was sent back to Australia. It is believed that he was refused entry because he happened to be a Tamil.

Defiance at Delhi

report of November 1997 which stated that "Sri Lanka will remain prone to upsurge of serious human rights violations , particularly "disappearances" until the government tackles the problem at their root cause.."

Mr.Malcolm R Gracie of Amnesty International, Australia, said that participants at the conference were mainly concerned about the human rights violations in Sri Lanka. What was happening was genocide. Innocent victims are the ones caught up in the war. These people are entitled to basic human rights, basic medical assistance and basic necessities of life, which are all denied, he said.

International Convention for Solidarity with the Eelam Tamils of Sri Lanka

Mr.Gillies Piquois of International Commission of Jurists, France , said in branding the Liberation Tigers as "terrorists" the Sri Lanka government was unable to understand the motivation behind those youths. They were neither terrorists nor extremists. They were fighting for the human rights of the Tamils and to free their people from bondage.

Sri Lanka was a country where the worst form of ethnic oppression was being practised. Neither schools, nor the sanctity of temples and churches were being regarded when it comes to aerial bombing. This deserves the highest condemnation by any civilised country. The people in France will lend their voice against any violation of human rights anywhere in the world.

India's former Foreign Secretary, **Mr.A.P.Venkateswaran** said that it was the height of stupidity on the part of the Indian government to seek to ban that convention. Nothing better could be expected from a Home Minister who did not understand the right of freedom of expression. He praised Mr.George Fernandes who had the courage to defy the ban.

Mr. Venkateswaran said he was the country's Foreign Secretary when Prime Minister Indira Gandhi was in power. She was prepared to help the Tamil militants in order to bring pressure on the Sri Lanka government to resolve the Tamil question. Her son had to pay a heavy price for following a policy contrary to his mother 's.

The Tamil-Sinhala problem, Mr.Vekateswaran said, had a history going back to 2,000 years. Later, during the colonial period, the progress achieved by the Tamils in various fields angered the Sinhalese. After independence, came the Bandaranaike-Chelva -nayagam Pact which could have led to sharing of power between the two peoples. But the man who prevented its implementation by instigating Buddhist fanatics was that 20th century Fox, Junius Jayewardene.

Joseph Pararajasingam

Much later in 1986, that same Jayewardene entered into a pact with India's Rajiv Gandhi for the same purpose of devolving power to the Tamils. It was agreed that the north and east would be merged and that a referendum would be held to confirm that merger But within two days of the agreement, Jayewardene announced that he himself would campaign against the merger of the two provinces

The Welikade massacre of Tamil political prisoners in July 1983 could not have happened without the tacit support of the government. Such provocative acts were the ones that made the LTTE take to arms. The Tigers were the ones who proved to the world that Tamils were no cowards.

Rajiv Gandhi believed Jayewardene's contention that a potential Tamil Eelam would lead to separation of Tamil Nadu and the setting up of a greater independent Tamil Nadu. It was this fear that was fed by Jayewardene that made Rajiv Gandhi send in the Indian forces into the north and east of the island.

As IPKF commander **Gen.Ashok Mehta** said earlier, had not Rajiv Gandhi sent in the Indian army, 1400 Indian soldiers would not have paid with their lives. Similarly, four, five times this number of Tamils would still be alive. It was Rajiv Gandhi's blunder that brought about this loss of lives. People who make such a noise about Rajiv Gandhi's life are not prepared to think of 6,000 to 7,000 Tamil killings in Sri Lanka.

Defiance at Delhi

Mr.Venkateswaran said that there was no doubt that the Tamil liberation struggle would continue, even if America comes to the aid of Sri Lanka. What happened in Vietnam ? When one or two American soldiers were killed in Somalia, the US forces beat a hasty retreat.America is not prepared to lose life, or make any sacrifice. But the Tigers are not like that

Mr.Venkateswaran said that although he was not a Tamli i in the full sense of the word, as a one-time Foreign Secretary. of the Indian government. he could say with confidence that no force on earth could prevent the eventual victory of the Eelam Tamils

Which government bombs its own people ? - *DK leader*

Leader of the Dravida Kalagam from Tamil Nadu **Mr.K.Veeramani** said that the Delhi Convention was just the right beginning. The holding of the convention had made a mockery of the ban imposed on it. "Thanthai Periyar" used to say that there was no ban that was insurmountable. This had been proved right here in Delhi People have to be first aware of what was happening in a neighbouring country They have/next learn to see the difference between terrorism and a freedom struggle The Tigers of Thamil Eelam are fighting to restore the fundamental rights of their people What does the UN say , that genocide of a people should be condemned. Several human rights bodies have already condemned this The Tamil people trust Prabhakaran and the Liberation Tigers. Is protecting your people terrorism ?

Dr.S.Sathananthan

Does the world expect the Tigers to sit with hands folded when their mothers and sisters are being raped ? Even the Indian law justifies the killing in self-defence. That is exactly what the Tigers were doing What was happening in Sri Lanka, Mr Veeramani said was not only a problem of the Tamils It was a human problem "Not a dog received the Sri Lankan army in Jaffna in December 1995"

It would be an act of political folly to try to separate the Eelam Tamils from the LTTE, said **Dr.S.Sathananthan**, Secretary of the Action Group of Tamils in Colombo (AGOTIC).

International Convention for Solidarity
with the Eelam Tamils of Sri Lanka

Three generations of Tamils are involved in the liberation struggle of the Tigers. The Chandrika government tries to make out that the Tamils are now ready to be "liberated" from the Tigers. Does it mean that they seek to fall into the arms of the Sinhala army ? When the Sinhala army entered Jaffna on December 5 1995, there was not even a dog to welcome it.

It appears that the Chandrika government's goal is to first cage the Tigers and then grant the Tamils concessions. Why not try giving the Tamils concessions without caging the Tigers ? For 20 long years Sinhala governments have been trying to cage the Tigers.

On Tamil National Heroes Day, Tamil leader Prabhakaran spoke with clarity. He said they were prepared to negotiate on the basis of the four principles enunciated at Thimphu. But the Chandrika government says there cannot be talks until the Tigers give up their arms. If the Tigers drop their arms, what is the need for talks ?

International Convention for Solidarity
with the Eelam Tamils of Sri Lanka

Those Tamil groups who had given up arms are entreating the government to negotiate with them, but the government pays no heed to that. If the Tigers give up arms, they will be in no way different from those groups. In fact,had not the Tigers become such a strong force, the Government will not be talking of devolution and packages.

Victory for the LTTE is assured, Dr.Sathananthan said

❑ ❑ ❑

AN OPEN LETTER TO SITARAM KESRI

President Cong (1), India.

November 19, 1997

Dear Mr. Kesri,

We are writing to protest the high handed attitude of the Congress Party and warn it of consqeuences that could follow.

The Congress which, through dedicated national leaders, obtained and nurtured independence was a monolith and was accepted as a national party in the years following independence. It was led by mature leaders. However, during the last several years it has been led by immature and ill-advised leadership, with most leaders jockeying for positions and personal gain. Corruption has kept on increasing and the party was voted out of power. It will never again be able to command a majority of seats in Parliament and form a government on its own. This reality seems to have been lost on you and other Congress party leaders. You seem to want to prop it up using a foreign born who happens to carry the Gandhi name as if, amongst the nearly one billion people in the country, there is no better person to lead the pary and the country.

Another reality that seems to have been lost on you, and the leaders of other parties as well, is that India is not a Nation. There has never been an Indian Nation or an Indian National, India is made up of countries brought together only under foreign rule - be that Moghuls or western. It is much like the European community or the now disbanded Soviet Union. Even the late Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru said, "There is no such things as an Indian. One is either a Punjabi,a Gujarati, a Tamil or a Kashmiri and then an Indian". When two "Indians" meet, unless they are from the same Nation, they converse in English, the link language.

Unless there is total equality amongst all the Nations of India, the country of India will break up into several countries. It is only a matter of time. This process will be quickened by the attitude of people in power. Unless the Federation of India is a loose one with more power to the states (with only foreign affairs, defense and monetary policy in the hands of the centre) and the various Nations are not only treated as equals, but made to feel equal, the break up will come as surely as night follows day. All Nations of India should have the right of self-determination with the right of secession, if necessary. The right of secession will be exercised only if the Nation concerned is not treated fairly and equally.

From
Thani K. Cheran

Already there was a secessionists movement in the South, particularly in Tamil Nadu, which was given up. However it is not dead and still is in the minds of Tamils. There are currently other such movements in other parts of the country. Presidential of military rule cannot put down the combined will of the people. It would at best be a temporary measure. The best and correct action will be to treat the concerned Nation fairly so that it can change its mind.

In enlightened democracies of the west, nations have been allowed to secede on the basis of a simple majority vote.

As a member of the Tamil community spread throgh several countries of the world, we wish to state something which most Tamils feel, but are too timed to state. That is, that is, that in "India". Tamils are treated as step children or as second class citizens. If this continues the 'worm will turn' one day.

The arrogance of being the largest Nation amongst all the Nations of India blinds you from respecting democracy which is the will of the people

1. Your party when in power dismissed the Tamil Nadu government elected by the Tamil people on two occasions, thus nullifying the franchise exercised by them. From what we read, it appears that you are maneuvering to get it done again.

Your party has been playing political

football with major Tamil parties by entering into electoral alliance first with one party and then the other in an unprincipled manner. Tamils have no doubt seen through this.

2. Your party government killed several hundred Tamils during the anti-Hindi agitation in 1965 not accepting the fact that the Tamils are as emotionally attached and proud of their language as you are of your language - Hindi.

3. The Cavery water issue for which all Tamils want a just solution remains unsolved for over 30 years. Would this have happened if the aggrieved party had been Gujaratis, Bengalis or Rajastanis?

4. Due to his immaturity and the ill-advice given to him, the late Prime Minisster Rajiv Gandhi signed a pact with the Sinhalese, one of the two parties to the national conflict in Sri Lanka. Instead of the mediator (India) signing a pact with the aggressor (Sinhalese), short-circuiting the aggrieved (Tamils), the wise action should have been to bring both the Sinhalese and the Tamils to a conference and get them to sign a pact acceptable to both. Rajiv Gandhi ignored the democratic wishes of the Tamil Nation in Sri Lanka. It may be recalled that at the last free elections held in Tamil areas in Sri Lanka, the people gave a clear mandate to their representatives to obtain a separate, independent, sovereign state.

Indian army: Heavy casualties

Having done this, he set out to disarm the liberation fighters who had been trained and armed by his illustrious mother. Thus started an unnecessary war due mainly to his inability to get the Sinhalese government to keep their part of the bargain. He had sided with the Sinhalese Buddhist chauvinists who had been anti-India over the years and continue to do so. He acted against the interest of Tamils who have been and always will be pro-India.

Would this have happened if the aggrieved party had been anyone other than Tamils? India has been supporting liberation movements throughout the world. A particular case in point is Bangladesh. When the Chif Minister of West Bengal threatened to send Bengalis from his state to then-East Pakistan in order to fight on behalf of the Bengalis in the East, Indian army was sent to liberate Bangladesh.

India's war with liberation fighters in Eelam resulted not only in the largest casualty experienced by the Indian army in any war it fought, but also in the death of thousands of liberation fighters, over 7000 deaths of innocent Tamil civilians, and extensive damage to property.

5. Your party in government also donated to Sri Lanka the Kachathivu island which belonged to the Raja of Ramnad, without any concurrence from the Tamil Nadu government.

Tamil Nadu fishermen who had been traditionay fishing in the waters around the Kachathivu island still go there to fish. The Sri Lankan navy has attacked them resulting in nearly 200 Tamil Nadu fishermen being killed and 163 languishing in Sri Lanka jails. All that the Indian government has been willing to do, hqving created the problem themselves is to protest to the Sri Lanka government which continues its action with impunity. Why is Indian not taking stem military action against Sri Lanka. Would this have happened if the island had belonged to some state other than Tamil Nadu and the fishermen belonged to some other Nations of India instead of Tamils?

All we can say is "enough in enough". The Tamil diaspora is greatly grieved and is considering what action to take.

Sincerely yours.

Thani K. Cheran

President,

World Tamil Organization, Inc. U.S.A.

LTTE: THE CUTTING EDGE OF TAMIL RESISTANCE IN SRI LANKA

A response of the Action Group of Tamils in Colombo (AGOTIC) to the news item "Tigers adopt new tool of terror" in The BangkokPost. 29 October 1997.

The Action Group of Tamils in Colombo (AGOTIC) read with considerable disquiet the news item titled "Tigers adopt new tool of terror", which appeared in The Bangkok Post on the 29t" of October 1997. The (anonymous) correspondent made sweeping allegations of drug trafficking by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE). It is a matter for the LTTE to deny or confirm these allegations, if it considers fit to do so.

However, AGOTIC notes that the so-called "hard evidence" of drug trafficking by the LTTE the correspondent referred to has yet to see the light of day. The correspondent did not cite a single instance where a member of the LTTE has been found guilty of drug trafficking by any court in any country in the world during the entire twenty-fve year history of the LTTE. Nor was concrete information provided of the so-called "links" between drug smugglers and the LTTE. The mud-slinging bordered on lunacy when all law-abiding overseas Tamil communities were accused of having "contributed to the heroin smuggling".

AGOTIC contests the cluster of assertions the correspondent made about the political character of the LTTE. In particular, we vigorously dispute the claim of an alleged decline of LTTE's historic role in the ongoing resistance of the Sri Lankan Tamil people against oppression by the Sri Lankan regime, which is controlled by the majority Sinhalese.

We wish to challenge the correspondent's news item primarily because it is the most recent instance of a systematic campaign of misinformation which could seriously undermine the already slim prospect for the political resolution of the Tamil Question in Sri Lanka. It is imperative to possess a sound grasp of the ground reality in order to work constructively for peace. For example, it is tragically counter-productive to conjure the illusion that the LTTE is not a political force to contend with. That illusion will embolden the already powerful Sinhalese "hawks", who are implacably opposed to conflict resolution through political reform and devolution of power. It makes negotiations between the Sri Lankan regime and the LTTE appear redundant; and it encourages the regime to pursue the military option in the vain hope that a supposedly weak LTTE could be defeated on the battle field. inevitably, peace will be the first casualty.

If he is a "terrorist" he is in excellent company from George Washington... to Nelson Mandela

Before we proceed further, however, a word about AGOTIC is in order. The Action Group of Tamils in Colombo is an independent group of ten Tamil activists who live and work in Colombo, Sri Lanka. It is a voluntary association formed more than three years ago, in March 1994. AGOTIC seeks to give voice to the Sri Lankan Tamils.

The members of AGOTIC include professionals, writers, human rights advocates, politicians and respected senior citizens of the Tamil community. As individuals we have directly and consistently been engaged in conflict resolution activities for more than a decade, dating from the 1984 All Party Conference (APC).

After forming AGOTIC, we have worked closely with community organisations, community leaders and activists from all major ethnic groups - Tamils, Sinhalese, Muslims, - and social castes in the whole of Sri Lanka. Those in AGOTIC who are members of political parties

Dr. S. Sathananthan

Secretary (AGOTIC)

have interacted extensively with the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP), which is in power, the opposition United National Party (UNP) and with the Colombo-based Tamil political parties..

We have followed political events closely, made numerous journalistic interventions and held many public meetings in search of a political solution to the Tamil Question. We monitor the evolution of official policy on conflict resolution. We study both the actions of the LTTE as well as the intimate interaction between the LTTE and the Tamil people.

The conclusions we reached and hold about the LTTE are sharply different from the assertions made by the correspondent in the above news item.

The correspondent claimed that "once" the LTTE had been seen as "the voice of a repressed Sri Lankan minority". But AGOTIC categorically states that the LTTE is the cutting edge of organised resistance by the Sri Lankan Tamil people; it continues to be the most credible voice of the Tamils who are struggling for their fundamental rights. More to the point, the LTTE crystallises the political and cultural aspirations of Tamils. The implicit claim of the correspondent, that the LTTE no longer plays the central role in Tamil resistance, is simply wrong.

> **“The LTTE did not fall from the sky. Its guerillas are the sons and daughters, brothers and sisters of Tamils.”**

The centrality of the LTTE is underlined by its nature and history. The LTTE did not fall from the sky. Its guerrillas are the sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, of Tamils. The organisation is about twenty-five years old. Given that one decade is a social generation, the LTTE members are the third generation of Tamil activists. It is no exaggeration to say that during the past two-and-half decades almost every extended Tamil family in the North-East Province (NEP) has had direct or indirect links with the LTTE.

We of course do not claim that every Tamil person supports the LTTE, which like all political groups has earned its share of enemies. But the fact is that the LTTE is part of Tamil history. In that crucial historical sense, the Tamils as a people are indistinguishable from the LTTE today. The roots of the LTTE run deep into Tamil society.

Consequently, if the LTTE is to be crushed militarily then it is necessary first to destroy the Tamils as a people. This is one reason for the war of genocidal proportions unleashed against Tamils in the NEP by the Sri Lankan armed forces, which are drawn almost exclusively from the Sinhalese. They continue their ruthless artillery shelling and aerial bombing, often blindly and indiscriminately at night, which rain death and destruction upon Tamil homes. They launched repeated military campaigns which displaced an estimated half million Tamil people. The economic embargo is a counter-insurgency measure of collective punishment meted out to Tamil civilians in the NEP. It ensured near famine conditions for Tamils and the children paid often with their lives for the shortages in food and essential medicines. Disappearances, human rights violations (including torture and rape) are legion; the documented cases of disappearances in one year (1996) in the Tamil cultural heartland, the northern Jaffna peninsula, numbered 676.

An obvious aim of the counter-insurgency tactic is to discourage popular Tamil support for the LTTE.

But the result has been the exact opposite, as had been the case in almost every instance in history where the counter-insurgency tactic was applied to civilian populations in other countries. Without a doubt the war which targets primarily the Tamil people has reinforced their support for the LTTE.

Those who allege the irrelevance of LTTE invariably look to the Colombo-based Tamil political parties as representatives of Sri Lankan Tamils. However - with the important exception of the All Ceylon Tamil Congress (ACTC) - the parties have effectively supported the military campaign against the Tamil people. They have colluded with the Sinhalese-controlled regime's futile attempt to undermine LTTE's political base among the Tamil people in order to re-float their own tattered collaborative politics. In the process they have been comprehensively discredited in the eyes of Tamils. Today they represent no one but themselves.

In fact, the LTTE is the only Tamil political organisation which is committed to, and is engaged in, the defence of Tamil rights.

Indeed we in AGOTIC can say with authority that the LTTE enjoys widespread and unprecedented support among the Tamil people. The correspondent's claim that the LTTE guerrillas "no longer are a major part of the Sri Lankan [sic] resistance" has no basis in fact. On the contrary the LTTE is the backbone of Tamil resistance. The armed forces battling the LTTE will endorse our view.

A recent tactic of the counter-insurgency strategy pursued by the armed forces in the Jaffna peninsula confirms our assessment. The Tamil population there has been herded between two 10-feet high walls or

"bunds". They are the Sri Lankan version of the draconian Strategic Hamlets constructed by the United States Army in Vietnam. The "bunds" were built roughly parallel and they run north to south, enclosing the city of Jaffna at their southern end. The aim is to deny contact between the Tamil people forced to live within the "bunds" and the LTTE guerrillas outside. To reinforce this strategy, thousands of young Tamil men and women are being held indefinitely in "administrative detention" (read, concentration camps) to prevent them from joining the LTTE.

By adopting the Strategic Hamlet tactic, the Sri Lankan regime is massively violating the fundamental rights of Tamils. It has also in effect admitted to the deep-rooted and almost universal support for the LTTE among Tamils. AGOTIC has no hesitation in saying that the LTTE guerrillas are the proverbial fish swimming in friendly (Tamil) waters.

In this context the decision of the United States government to include the LTTE in its list of "terrorist organisations" is of little relevance. History is replete with wars in which one person's "terrorist" was another person's "freedom fighter". Perhaps the United States policy makers have forgotten that George Washington was treated as a "terrorist" by the British. In South Asia, Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru were incarcerated as "terrorists" by the colonial regime in British India. The Father of Bangladesh, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, was vilified as a "separatist", condemned as a "terrorist" and imprisoned by the (West) Pakistani regime. We could add Mao Tse Tung, Ho Chi Ming, Fidel Castro, Robert Mugabe and Nelson Mandela to the long list of erstwhile "terrorists". If Velupillai Prabhakaran is classified as a "terrorist", he is in excellent company.

Lastly, the correspondent's assertion that the LTTE is "falling off its principles", that it has virtually abandoned the struggle for Tamil rights, is grossly uninformed as it is dangerously misleading. Such misinformation has been disseminated on numerous occasions before. It is dangerous because it leads the Sinhalese "hawks" in the regime to erroneously conclude that the LTTE is losing political ground and so to indulge in the delusion of grandeur that a military solution to the Tamil Question is feasible. The "hawks" are consequently encouraged to pursue the military option against the Tamil people with greater vigour.

We emphasise the strength of the LTTE because the reality on the ground is that the LTTE is the force to contend with. If Sri Lankan policy makers who are entrusted with the task of conflict resolution succumb to the misinformation, choose to bury their heads in the sand and pretend that the LTTE is irrelevant or could be wished away, they do so at their peril.

If the ground reality is ignored or misconstrued, the prospects for a negotiated settlement between the Sri Lankan regime and the LTTE will inevitably be undermined and all communities in Sri Lanka will be cruelly denied peace.

U.S. "TERRORIST" CHARGE FAILS: IMMIGRANT WINS COURT CASE

In an oral decision rendered on October01, 1997, a federal immigration judge struck down the government's attempt to deport Imad Hamad a Michigan social worker whose 15-year immigration ordeal has become a cause *célèbre* in the Arab-American community.

The government was attempting to deport Hamad, who has been in the U.S. for 17 years, alleging he supported "terrorist activities." The government submitted secret evidence, which the defendant could not examine or refute, to prove its case. Immigration Judge (IJ) John Walsh had to obtain security clearance to examine the alleged evidence.

Judge Walsh held that Hamad, whose wife and two young children are U.S. citizens; could adjust his status to permanent resident. "The government has been harassing me for years because of my past lawful political activity," said Hamad, who is Palestinian, adding, "I hope at last this nightmare is over." The IJ cited the "extreme hardship" that Hamad's deportation would cause the Hamad family.

While Hamad is permitted to stay in the United States, the IJ allowed the government's secret evidence into the trial, but found that it "was not substantial enough" to prevent Hamad' adjustment. Hamad's lawyer filed an injunction in federal court questioning the constitutionality of allowing the secret evidence.

Hamad was arrested at a 1982 student sit-in in San Francisco protesting the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. He has since encountered a serie of bizarre immigration roadblocks, including threatening phone calls that mentioned information only the INS would know. The Hamad case is one of several in which the government is attempting to use secret evidence to deport individuals. Several immigrants are currently inU.S. jails based on secret evidence.

LTTE: MALAYSIAN PROFESSOR CONDEMNS U.S. BAN

Dr. P. Ramasamy, Associate Professor, Political Science. National University of Malaysia, 43600, Bangi Selangor has sent the following strongly worded letter to the American Ambassador in Kuala Lumpur condemning the U.S. listing of the LTTE as a "terrorist" organisation:-

6 November 1997

His Excellency
The United States Ambassador
The American Embassy
376 Jalan Tun Razak
50400 Kuala Lumpur
Malaysia

Your Excellency,

I am really saddened and disillusioned by the rash and arbitrary act of the U.S. State Deparment to list the LTTE as one of the terrorist organisations. Such an ill-conceived act gives out strong indications that the U.S. has capitulated to the wishes of the Sri Lnaka government that relies on force to resolve the ethnic conflict with the Tamils. Furthermore, this decision indeed makes a mockery of the high ideals often advocated by the U.S. for advancement of peace and democracy. I an afraid the decision to ban the LTTE has emboldened the government to prolong the war.

To categorize the LTTE as a terrorit organisation is akin to calling the American struggle for independence from Britiain more than 300 years ago as also terrorist in nature. This all encompassing and highly subjective interpretation would not spare any national lberation struggle except those thar serve the ideological and political interests of the U.S. LTTE is not a TERRORIST ORGANISATION. It is the only organisation in Sri lanka a that has the capability and the courage to effectively represents the interests of the majority of the Tamils in the face of Sinahala chauvinistic hostility. Of course, there are other Tamil groups, but the unfortunately most of them have captulated to the wishes of the government. These groups operating under the shadow of the regime can hardly be considered as representatives of the Tamils. Even the feeble devolution package would not have been initiated without the formidable presence of the LTTE.

Wjile the Sri Lankan government has approched many countries to ban the LTTE, it however, has not done so. Perhaps the U.S. State Deparment should have considered this simple fact before making the rash decision. The government-s non-imposition of theban is tacit dmission on its part that, sooner or later, it has to talk to the LTTE. In others words, despite all the bad talk about the LTTE, the govenment itself is well aware that it is only the LTTE that has the backing of the majority of the Tamils. Futhermore, the govenments inability to militarily defeat the LTTE is another incontrovertible fact of the resilience and authensity of the LTTE as the only effective representative of the Tamils. More than this, the Tamil diaspora in Malaysia, England, Europe and the countries have over the years have endorsed the LTTE-s struggle for the emancipation of Tamils in Sri Lanka. It is not that the U.S. does not know about these, but unfortunately, geopolitical considerations have influenced the U.S. to adopt a decision that is basically a non-starter in the first place.

The argument of the Sri Lankan government is that the U.S. decision will influence other countries to adopt similar decisions. Such decisions will be able to block the flow of foreign funds depended heavily by the LTTE. It must be realzed that LTTE is not an organisation that has predicated it existence on the flow of foreign funds. Whileforeign funding from the Tamil diaspora is important, the very survival of the LTTE is based on the support it receives from the Tamil people in Sri Lanka itself. Thus, even if the flow of foreign fund is restricted, the LTTE will be able to sustain itself on the basis of moral and intellectual support it continues to receive from Tamils and non-Tamils around the world. It is predicted by some independent observers that the LTTE has the capacity to cinduct the struggle for liberation for many years to come. Ironically, the recent captur of Jaffna hs only contributed to a massive influx of Tamil youths to the fold of the LTTE. In fact, the capture of Jaffna has widened the LTTE-s recruitment base.

It is rather unfortunate that the U.S. continues to repeat is historical follies. In the 1960s, the U.S. attempt to "liberate" vietnam form the communits proved latter to be farce. The U.S. was defeated by the Vietnamese nationalists. For many years, U.S. along with Israel condemned the PLO as a terrorist organisation. Only much later it was realized that the continued non-recognition of the PLO would not gurantee the interests of the U.S. in the Middle East. The U.S. manipulation of the pathetic U.N. during the Korean war and much later in the war against Iraq ate examples to illustrate how international organisation have been used to serve the geopolitical interests of the U.S. Such actions by the U.S. have meant that it has little regard for international law and more importantly for the promotion of the world peace. Despite all the theroric, the U.S. still firmly believes in the infamous axiom: might is right.

I strongly believe that there is change for peace in Sri Lanka if countries like the U.S. stops taking side in the on-going conflict. A good start would be for the U.S. to rescind its earlier unpopular decision.

Yours sincerely,

Assoc. Prof. P. Ramasamy
Dept of Political Science
National University of Malaysia
43600 Bangi Selangor.

Scot support for Tamil nationhood

To: Editor
Hot Spring
(by Email)

From: Alasdair MacCaluim (Alasdair@staran.globalnet.co.uk)
Subject: Scotland and the Tamils
Date: 20 December 1997 07:54

A charaid,

I am a Scottish nationalist and member of the SNP. I went to the Tamil cultural festival in Edinburgh in October at the time of the Commonwealth heads of government meeting and very much enjoyed myself. I knew next to nothing about the Tamil cause prior to the festival but I learned a lot about it during the day when I had the chance to speak to many people.

I am in full support of the Tamil people's struggle for nationhood and am very glad that the festival did so much to show the similarity between the causes of the Tamils and other "fourth world" or stateless nations like Scotland and Wales. I was particularly interested in the copy of ***Hot Spring*** which I was given on the day of the march and was pleased to see that many articles made comparisions with Scotland and Wales.

I am also a member of the Scottish branch of the Celtic League, a group which campaigns for home rule for the celtic countries and for greater rights to be given to the Celtic languages (Gaelic, Manx, Irish, Welsh, Cornish and Breton) and am editior of the Scottish branch of the Celtic League's quarterly magazine "*Stri*". We are very keen to promote international issues as well as national ones and would like to put in a wee bit about the Tamil nationalists in the next issue or the issue after that. I very much enjoyed the article "If what happened to the Tamils, happened to the Scottish and Welsh" by Dr. Shiamala Suntharalingam which appeared in the September Hot Spring. Would it be all right if I reprinted that article in "Stri"?

I look forward to hearing from you.
le deagh dhurachd,

Alasdair MacCaluim

A Tamil voice from Mauritius

The Editor
HOT SPRING

Dear Sir.

A Tamil voice from Mauritius

I hereby take the opportunity, if not audacity, to write on behalf of the somewhat subdued Tamil voice from the island of Mauritius.

Being fairly new to the Eelam struggle, I have had the good fortune of coming across genuine Tamil brothers and sisters who have enlightened me on the ongoing problems faced by our Tamil counterparts in Sri Lanka. In October, I had the privilege of being part of the gathering of Tamils in Edinburgh for the festival of Tamil culture.Never before have I seen such a massive gathering of people all genuinely intent upon leaving their own problems behind, albeight for one day, just to show support for a common cause - a free Tamil Eelam. It was for me a most uplifting experience which helped to strengthen my sense of belonging to such a wonderful community as the Tamil community.

As such, I would like to urge my fellow countrymen to demonstrate that same sense of belonging by starting to pledge allegiance to the Tamil cause in Sri Lanka in a more overt manner because I strongly believe that our strength lies in our unity against the oppression of our people. To achieve this, we must all learn to view Tamils around the world as branches stemming from the same tree, if not from the same root and as such,we must strive to protect that same big tree in whatever ways we can.

I sincerely hope that my message reaches the hearts and souls of our Tamil brothers and sisters of Mauritius and that there will be plenty more to follow in my footsteps in providing support to our Tamil counterparts in Sri Lanka.

Rajah D.Somoo
Tottenham , London N 15

Scots and Tamils

ADRIAN WJEMANNE ***United Kingdom, in a letter published in the Sunday Leader, Colombo.***

There is a parallel between the political experience of the UK and Sri Lanka, which seems to be little appreciated in both countries. Both countries are not homogneous entities they ae made up of diffent people who constitute the majority of the resident population in compact, well demarcated territories within each contry. In the UK they are Scottish, Welsh and Irich people in Scotland, Wales and Nothern Ireland rspectively. In Sri Lanka the Tamil people in the north-east provinces.

The parellel with Scotland is even more intriguing as it has a different system of law from the rest of the UK just as the *thesavalamai* system of personal law applies to the Tamil population in the north-east province, but not to the rest of the island's population. The Scot' pride themselves on their presumed educational superiority to all else in the country, much as Jaffna Tamils do in Sri Lanka.The Scots are notorious for their parsimony and provident ways - attributes widely accorded to Jaffna's Tamil people.

The attitude of the English to all this posturing and threats to leave the union in not one of murderous hostility. On the contrary it is one of rather amused disbelief that these three people can go it alone in the modern world and pay their way. In the streets I have asked english acquaintances whether they wish to wage war to prevent the break-up of the union and recieved responses which though pilite, left on doubt that such question could only have been asked by a barbarian. I have abondened these attempts in order to save genuine friendship.

The World's history does not contain a single example of devolution, however extreme, buying off a natin's aspiration for sovereign independence. The Sinhala nationaists in Sri Lanka who make this point hve history on their side. Where they go wrong is their conviction that where devolution is certin to fail, all-out military suppression will succeed. The lessons of history is that neither works. That is way all peace making efforts from Palestine to Mindanao have aimed for rational accommodation with armed independence movements continuing to retain their arms and territory after the settlement. Nothing else has been found to work.

For our "older" Readers:

We were born before television, before penicillin, Polio Shots, frozen foods, Photocopiers, modern plastics, contact lenses, videos, frisbees and the pill.

We are just before radar, and we were certainly before credit cards; split atoms, laser-beams and ball-point pens; before dishwashers, airconditioners, tumble-driers, drip-dry shirts and before man walked on the moon or even thought it a posibility.

We got married first and then lived together (how quaint can you be): we thought 'fast food' was what you ate dring Lent: a 'Big Mac' was an oversized raincoat and 'crumpet' you had for tea. We existed before House-Husbands, computer dating , dual careers and when 'meaningful relationships' meant getting along with cousins. Whilst 'sheltered accommodation' was where you waited for the bus.

We were before dav-care centres group homes and disposable nappies. we never heard of FM radio; tape-decks; electric typewriters: artificial hearts; word-processores, yoghurt and (pirates aside) young men wearing earring. For us 'time-sharing' meant togetherness, a 'chip' was a piece of wood or a fried potato; 'hardware' meant nuts and bolts; 'doftware' wasn't a word; a RAM wa male sheep and a 'mouse' was an animal who frightened the Vicar's wife. A PC was the village constable.

Before 1940 anything 'Made in japan' was junk the term 'making out' reffered to how you did in your exams, 'stud' was something that fastened a collar to a shirt and going all the way meant stating on a double decker bus to the depot.

Pizzas, McDonalds and instant coffee were unheard of in our day, cigarette smoking was 'fashionable' 'grass' was mown, "coke" was kept in the coalhouse, a 'joint' was a piece of meat you had on Sundays and 'dot' was something you cooked in or kept under the bed. 'Rock Music' was grandmother's lullaby; 'Eldorado' ws an ice cream and a 'gay' person was the life and soul of the party; 'MDS' were things to help people with disabilities and a 'level playing field' was unknown.

We who were born before 1940 must be hardy bunch when you think of the way in which the world has changed and the adjustments we have had to make. No wonder we are so confused and there is a generation gap.

New Delhi Convention: The Resolutions

The following resolutions were passed at the Solidarity with the Eelam Tamils of Sri Lanka Convention held in New Delhi on 14 December 1997

National Committee for Solidarity with the Eelam Tamils of Sri Lanka

The convention resolves to set up a National Committee for Solidarity with the Eelam Tamils of Sri Lanka to continue with the work undertaken by this International convention. It further resolves that the National Committee take steps to organise conventions in all the state capitals to educate the people on the situation confronting the Sri Lankan Tamils, and to exert pressure on the India government to take initiatives to bring about an end to the armed conflict in Sri Lanka and a peaceful settlement through negotiations.

The Committee may also set up an Information Centre in Delhi and publish pamphlets and other publicity material highlighting the plight of the Tamils in Sri Lanka. It may also take other necessary steps in furtherance of its purpose.

The convention elects Mr. Justice Krishna Iyer as Chairman and George Fernandes as convenor of the committee with powers to coopt other members.

US involvement in Sri Lanka:

The convention takes serious note of the involvement of US military in the ongoing operations by the Sinhala armed forces against the LTTE. The training provided to the Sinhala army by the US "Green Berets" is accompanied by a trade off in which the Sinhala government has made concessions to the US forces that will have adverse bearing on India's security concerns.

The convention calls upon the Government of India to take up this matter with both the Sinhala and US governments, and further take necessary steps to prevent any developments in the region that will impinge on India's security interests.

Elections in Sri Lanka

The convention resolves to request all Tamil political parties and other organisations in Sri Lanka not to participate in any elections in Tamil areas till normalcy returns to those areas and all registered voters can participate in free and fair elections. The convention believes that this can only happen if all displaced persons living in refugee camps, with friends and relatives and by the roadside and those driven away from their homes by security forces and others return to their homes. In addition, armed forces should withdraw from Tamil areas (or remain within barracks) and international observer missions should supervise such elections.

Sri Lankan Tamils in Indian prisons

The convention is concerned at the fate of the Sri Lankan Tamils who are detained in Indian prisons in Vishakhapatnam, Vellore Special Camp, Chingleput Special Camp and elsewhere. It is particularly distressed at the unlawful detention of nine Sri Lankan Tamils in Vishakhapatnam, whose case history is a sad commentary on the state of the rule of law in India. The nine were arrested on the high seas by the Indian navy and detained under TADA. The TADA court released them and passed strictures on the Indian naval authorities and the police for their lawless behaviour. The state appealed against their release to the Supreme Court which also ordered their release and passed more strictures on the state. They were released and again arrested under Foreigners Act and this time the Magistrate ordered their release. They were arrested for the third time under the National Security Act and are continuing to rot in jail for over four years. Those lodged in Vellore Special Camp are mostly invalids.

The convention calls upon the government to forthwith release these prisoners, and provide them with safe asylum in the country till the situation in Sri Lanka becomes conducive for their return.

Jain Commission Report:

The convention condemns the aspersions cast by the Jain Commission on the Tamil people by branding them as anti-nationals. It also condemns similar aspersions cast on the Sikh people. Its patently false charge against the Queen of Nepal of conspiring to kill Rajiv Gandhi has contributed to souring India's relations with a friendly and trustworthy neighbour.

The convention calls upon the government to reject the Jain Commission report, wind up the Commission, and assuage the hurt feelings of the Tamil and Sikh people, and the Nepalese by making unqualified public apologies.

Eelam Refugees in India

The Eelam Tamils who have sought refuge in India from a genocidal war are treated like unwanted persons. They are not being given the basic minimum needs and facilities due to them under international conventions. They are not even given subsistence allowance, and other facilities on par with refugees from other foreign countries.

The authorities are also trying to prevent the fleeing Eelam Tamils from reaching India's shores by driving them back, confiscating their boats etc with the help of the coast guard, the Tamil Nadu police, etc.

The convention requests the Government of India and the Government of Tamil Nadu to enable the Eelam refugees live their lives in human dignity. It also requests them not to prevent the refugees from coming to India, especially to Tamil Nadu.

" Withdraw Sri Lankan forces from the occupied Tamil homeland "

❍ Whereas there are two nations (Sinhalese and Tamil) in the island of Ceylon which occupy separate contiguous areas, which had separate kingdoms before the advent of western colonial powers and which were administered separately even by them till 1833, when the British brought the two nations under one administration for convenience;

❍ Whereas on independence, power was handed to the Sinhala nation, and the Sinhalese discriminated against and oppressed the Tamils in every sphere of activity including education, language, employment, industrial and infrastructure development, and land usage, as admitted by many Sinhalese including Presidents Jayawardane and Kumaratunga;

❍ Whereas the demography of the Tamil homelands (as defined in the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord) was changed and continues to be changed by the state-aided colonization of those areas by the Sinhalese, and the driving away of Tamils and settling of Sinhalese in their homes;

❍ Whereas the Constitution was changed in 1972 and 1978 without Tamil participation, giving pride of place to Buddhism and specifically stating the form of government shall be unitary;

❍ Whereas parliamentary protest, satyagraha (non-violent demonstrations), and dialogue did not redress Tamil problems, but only produced repeated communal riots against Tamils with thousands killed and billions of rupees of property being destroyed culminating in the pogrom of 1983;

❍ Whereas, since the satyagraha of 1961, Tamil areas have been constantly under army occupation by the 99% Sinhala army, with currently over 200 camps;

❍ Whereas after requesting a federal type of government and being refused, Tamils finally gave the mandate at the 1977 elections to restore the Tamil state; and when this was refused, and as a last resort, the youth took to arms to carry out the people's mandate;

❍ Whereas all Tamil groups met with the Sri Lankan government under the auspices of the Indian government in Thimpu, Bhutan, and demanded four cardinal principles, namely, the recognition of Tamils as a nation, recognition of Tamil homeland, the right to self-determination for Tamils and citizenship for all Tamils who were made stateless, all of which were turned down;

❍ Whereas since 1990 the government unleashed state terrorism against Tamils;

a) Indiscriminately bombing, shelling and strafing of Tamil areas resulting in the destruction or damage to residences, schools, hospitals, places of worship, businesses and infrastructure, cut off electricity, telephone and water services and enforced an economic embargo on 72 items including food, medicine and other necessities besides those required for earning a living.

b) Indiscrimately arresting, torturing, raping and killing of civilians resulting in over 50,000 Tamil civilian deaths to date, and over 850,000 leaving the island as refugees.

All of which amounts to genocide under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide to which the Sri Lankan government is a signatory;

❍ Whereas the government of Sri Lanka is following a scorched earth policy by destroying cultivated crops, damaging cultivable lands and burning large tracts of forest areas;

❍ Whereas, since April 1995, state terrorism has intensified with the army capturing Tamil areas and conducting victory celebrations reminiscent of medieval times, and aggressively rounding up and arresting innocent civilians, making people flee their homes resulting in over 750,000 internal refugees suffering innumerable hardships due to lack of shelter, food and medicines, with many living under trees and dying due to lack of food and medicines - particularly in areas not under control of government forces;

❍ Whereas the government had enforced press censorship, refused entry to local and foreign journalists to Tamil areas, and prevented NGOs from operating in those areas resulting in people outside these areas not being aware of conditions in them;

The convention resolves to appeal to the Government of India, other world governments, and the world community to pro-actively engage and pressurise the Sri Lankan government to:

a) Stop human rights violations such as the indiscriminate bombing, shelling and strafing of Tamil areas;
   the arrests, torture, rape and killing of innocent Tamil civilians;
   embargo on food, medicine and other necessities of life to Tamil areas;
   denial of care of refugees who have fled their homes by depriving them of adequate shelter, food and medicines;
b) Desist from interfering with refugees leaving by boat to India;
c) Permit NGOs to work in Tamil areas so that they may provide help to refugees;
d) Allow journalists, both local and foreign, to visit the Tamil areas and report freely on the conditions there;
e) Cease further colonization and settlement of Sinhalese in Tamil areas;
f) Desist from destroying cultivated and cultivable lands and forests;
g) Repeal the Prevention of Terrorism Act and rescind the Emergency Regulations;
h) Solve the national problem politically rather than pursue a military solution as the government is doing now;
i) Withdraw the army from Tamil areas; and
j) Negotiate with the LTTE (who represent the Tamil people and who are fighting the liberation war on their behalf) under third party mediation.

The convention requests the Indian government to specifically take up this issue at United Nations fora, if other steps fail, to press the Sri Lankan government to withdraw its forces from the occupied Tamil homeland and to initiate peace negotiations to end the conflict.

"There is overwhelming support for LTTE in Tamil Nadu"

- Says George Fernandes

Excerpts from an interview with Samata Party leader George Fernandes and an ally of the BJP by a special correspondent of the SUNDAY TIMES, Colombo. Published in its issue of December 21, 1997.

ST: I take it that you are committed to a united India. This being so, how can you support the LTTE's demand for an independent Tamil Eelam ?

GF: The Tamils had been fighting for a Federal system and equality for two decades using Gandhian methods. But these had borne no fruit. Their condition only worsened over time. A secular Sri Lanka became a Buddhist Sri Lanka, and primacy was given to Sinhala. All this militated against Tamil-Sinhala unity.

ST: Will not the movement for, or the formation of, Eelam trigger a secessionist movement in Tamil Nadu?

GF: The situation in India is different. We have a federal system, though it is still not perfect. Coalitions from regional parties have ruled from Delhi. Both the DMK and the AIADMK have been part of Central governments. There is a state for the Tamils which they rule autonomously. There is no discrimination against Tamils or any other people, and there have been no ethnic pogroms

ST: What according to you is the attitude of the DMK. It seems to go along with the government on the LTTE issue tamely ?

GF: The DMK also feels that the attitude of the Central government is irrational, in as much as it is allowing a widow to determine foreign policy. But the DMK is afraid of taking a stand against this , as it might become an emotive issue. Indians could easily be moved by emotions.

ST: Do you think that there is support for the Eelam issue and the LTTE in Tamil Nadu ?

GF: There is overwhelming support. This will come to light if there is a referendum.

ST: Then why is it not being used to the hilt in elections by parties like the DMK and PMK ?

GF: That is because it has never been an election issue. Election in Tamil Nadu have always been fought on other issues.

Govt. arm twisting forces Colombo Tamil groups into Jaffna election fray

Arm twisting by the Chandrika government forced the largely progovernment Tamil groups in Colombo to enter the local government elections in Jaffna. When most of the groups , with the exception of the EPDP, showed a disinclination to contest what they considered a farcical election under army rule, the Secretary of the People's Alliance, D.M.Jayaratne let it be known that if the Tamil groups were not prepared to contest, the government party itself will field a slate of candidates!.

Since it was possible to win a seat with even eight or ten votes as it happened previously, the Tamil groups gave in tamely. Imagine a Sinhalese Mayor in Jaffna city elected to power with ten votes , brought in by the army!

Apart from the presence of the army , two of the Tamil groups, the EPDP and the PLOTE, were both electioneering with arms. This was not a pleasing prospect for the TULF, and they wanted the government to disarm all contestants. With the government not heeding the request, the TULF decided to go into the fray anyway. They had already decided on the nomination of a widow, (in keeping with popular tradition), Mrs.Yogeswaran, wife of the onetime Jaffna M.P. for the Jaffna Mayoralty. It was whispered that the PLOTE had a secret understanding with the TULF, in warding off the challenge of the EPDP.

The EPRLF, feeling insecure to go it alone, partly because of the fear of the EPDP, and partly because of the fear of the people, who had bitter memories of this group which had terrorised the population during the IPKF presence, wanted a common front of Tamil candidates from all the groups. This, both the EPDP and PLOTE rejected, and the proposal fell through.

The elections will now be held with extra road blocks, and barbed wire barriers. ❑

Sri Lanka police harass Indian woman journalist

Sri Lankan police raided the hotel room of Indian woman journalist Sudha Ramachandran on November 30 and questioned her for over an hour after searching her room at Colombo's Taj Hotel.

Sudha Ramachandran (33) who is correspondent for the Indian newspaper DECCAN HERALD had been to army-occupied Jaffna . The police told her she was being investigated for any Tiger links, after unidentified sources alerted them that she had pictures of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam as well as pictures of the city of Colombo. They seized photographs which she had taken during her assignment, already cleared by the government's war ministry, but returned them later.

A security officer at the Taj Hotel said Ramachandran was being suspected "because she is an Indian Tamil". But he denied they had called the police in.

Said Ramachandran : "If they see every Tamil as a Tiger, they are never going to solve this problem in SriLanka".

It is known that two other Indian journalists had also been similarly raided and questioned at the same hotel in the past two years during reporting assignments in Sri Lanka. Journalists who were prevented from going to Jaffna when the Tigers were administering the area are now permitted to go after military clearance. ❑

Camera snatched from Tamil newspaper photographer

In another incident, the photographer of the Colombo Tamil daily, THE VIRAKESARI who was trying to take pictures of Tamil political prisoners demonstrating against arbitrary detention was prevented from doing so. Police snatched his camera, and removed the film The incident took place at the Welikade prison in Colombo.

"Jaffna polls, a mockery of democracy"

The General Secretary of the Nava Sama Samaja Party, Dr.Vikramabahu Karunaratne, has criticised the government decision to hold local government elections in the Jaffna and Kilinochchi districts as a mockery of democracy.

The Press release by the party states that the ground situation in the north was not appropriate for holding elections as those areas were under army occupation. Around 650 people have disappeared, with the possibility of more disappearances.

Dr. Karunaratne said that 50 percent of the population in those areas were displaced, scattered and traumatised. He described the government decision as "riding roughshod over the mass mood and sensibilities of the Tamils and the vulnerable position that they are in today".

-News Briefs-

Indian envoy cools his heels in Colombo

India's High Commissioner designate to Sri Lanka, Mr.Shivasankar Menon, who arrived in Colombo on November 24, was cooling his heels without presenting his credentials for more than three weeks, because the President had not given a date for the ceremony.

New U.S. ambassador arrives

The newly appointed U.S.ambassador to Sri Lanka, Shaun Donnelly arrived in Colombo on December 6. He replaces Ambassador Peter Burleigh. .

Mr.Donnelly served as Deputy Assistant Secretary in charge of Trade and Policy Programs in the State Department's Bureau of Economic and Business Affairs.

UNP M.P. calls for amnesty to Tamil political prisoners

U.N.P. Parliamentarian Jayalath Jayawardena has called for the graning of an amnesty to Tamil detainees held in the Kalutara and other prisons against whom there was no substantial evdence. Nearly 600 Tamils are held in various jails and detentioncampswithout charge for months and years. Mr.Jayalath Jayawardena had visited Tamil inmates in the Kalutara prison in the aftermath of the December 10 incident in which three Tamildetainees were killed by fellow Sinhala convicts.

Army spy faces rape charge

An army intelligence officer based in Vavuniya has been arrested on the charge of raping a 17-year old Tamil girl in Vavuniya. The soldier had allegedly stopped the girl and her sister at Market Road, Vavuniya and taken them to a lodge on the pretext of questioning them. The sister had escaped and reported the matter to the local PLOTE office. The suspect was arrested and produced in court.

Sarojini Yogeswaran recalls LTTE chief

Mrs.Sarojini Yogeswaran, TULF candidate in the Jaffna Municipal election, speaking to a reporter of a Colombo newspaper is stated to have smilingly recalled her first encounter with the LTTE leader Velupillai Prabhakaran. "He visited our home in Jaffna wearing bell bottoms and looking spruced up and smart".

The second time it was dark and so I did not see him clearly as he spoke to my husband, she said. "His wife is very pretty. I knew her when she was a student".

President Chandrika back from London

President Chandrika Kumaratunga who was on a private visit to the U.K. seeking admission of her daughter Yasodara in a medical college there returned to the island on December 13. She was escorted from the Bandaranaike International airport by a unit of the army's artillery regiment, according to a Colombo newspaper.

Foreign NGO rep.sent out of Batticaloa

A foreign national, representative of HIVOS, was ordered out of Batticaloa, when he sought permission from the military authorities to enter an area under LTTE control. Dr.Shanmugaratna from Norway who accompanied the visitor was himself ordered out, but on pleading that he was a citizen of the country, he was permitted to stay. The HIVOS representative left for Colombo on December 8.

Young wife believed drowned in the sea

A pathetic incident has been reported where a young wife Geetharani (27) was believed drowned in the sea off Trincomalee in trying to see her husband at the Trincomalee courts.

Her husband N.Maheswaran who was arrested by the police on suspicion three months ago was held at the Anuradhapura jail. On hearing that her husband was being brought to the Trincomalee courts on December 15, she decided to leave for Trinco from her home in Mutur, along with her two children, aged 3 and 6 in a small boat. On the way to Kinniya, the boat capsized. While the two children were rescued by helpful onlookers, there was no trace of Geetharani.

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Jain Commission report: Karunanidhi hits back

Excerpts from an interview given by Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.Karunanidhi to FRONTLINE editor N.Ram and Special Correspondent T.S.Subramaniam

- FRONTLINE, December 12, 1997

".... when the LTTE fiercely fought the IPKF in Sri Lanka, the LTTE in India was not banned. What is evident from this is that Rajiv Gandhi harboured the expectation of reaching a compromise with the LTTE. An instance of this is the meeting between Rajiv Gandhi and the LTTE Politburo member Kasi Anandan at Rajiv Gandhi residence in New Delhi on March 5, 1991. During that meeting Kasi Anandan gave a letter to Rajiv. It is also with the Jain Commission. That letter, which has been mentioned in the Jain Commission report, begins thus : "I present you the greetings of Mr.V.Prabhakaran, our leader". It adds: "It is my hope that this meeting will mark the beginning of a cordial and friendly relationship between you and our movement". The letter also says: "At this juncture, it is necessary as an immediate step that the communication gap between the Government of India and the LTTE be effectively bridged and links properly established".

"The reply that Rajiv Gandhi gave after reading this letter has also been mentioned in the Jain Commission report: "Rajiv Gandhi appreciated the stand of the LTTE and admitted that a wrong approach had been made in the past to solve the Tamil problem. He wanted the LTTE to continue the struggle and assured it help. Neverthless, he asked Kasi Anandan to get a letter from Prabhakaran as to what the LTTE chief expected of him".

"After this, Arjuna Sittampalam, an LTTE emissary based in London, met Rajiv Gandhi on March 15, 1991, in New Delhi.....

Chandra Shekhar

"(Yasser) Arafat , who was recently in India, said he had already warned Rajiv Gandhi about a plot to kill him and that he had informed Chandra Shekhar about it. Arafat said this to reporters Jain sent a questionnaire to Arafat seeking an explanation about what he said.

"For eight months, V.P.Singh was not in power. For four months, the DMK was not in power.At that time Chandra Shekhar was Prime Minister at the Centre. There was Governor's rule here. During this period, who should have controlled the militants ? That is why I told OUTLOOK magazine in an interview that if I, as a writer were asked to write a story on this assassination case, I would write it as follows. Some stories introduce a hero and heroine, they go forward and finally end in a conclusion. Some stories begin with the climax and are then narrated in a flashback. As far as this story is concerned, it is one that should begin with the climax.

Rajiv Gandhi at Sriperumbudur on May21, 1991, minutes before the blast in which he was killed.

"How should it begin ? How did the human bomb Dhanu, chargesheeted in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case, come to Tamil Nadu? Who came with her ? Where did she stay and with whom did she stay ? Who took her to Sriperumbudur ? Who arranged the programme of Rajiv Gandhi ? Who suddenly made changes in the programme ? To what places did Sivarajan go in Tamil Nadu ? Why could Sivarajan not be apprehended till he went to Bangalore ?It is said that the place where Sivarajan stayed and was cornered in Bangalore belongs to a Congressman. What are the details ?

At the place where Rajiv Gandhi died, no Congressman was injured The persons who died there were police officers who provided him security. At this point of time, there was an alliance between Rajiv Gandhi's party, the Congress (I)and the AIADMK in Tamil Nadu. Why did no candidate belonging to that alliance go to the public meeting addressed by Rajiv Gandhi ? After his death, why was no effort made to see the body at the airport ? Not only that. When Rajiv Gandhi travelled from the airport to Chennai, though Jayalalitha was not then in town, did any AIADMK candidate who contested with Congress (I) support, or any AIADMK worker receive him ? ......

Prabhakaran through the eyes of Dixit

(Excerpted from ASSIGNMENT COLOMBO, *by J N Dixit, Konarak Publishers, 1998, A-149, Main Vikas Marg, New Delhi 110 001.)*

"The LTTE's emergence as the most dominant and effective politico-military force representing Tamil interests was due to the following factors:

"First, the character and personality of its leader V Prabhakaran who is disciplined, austere and passionately committed to the cause of Sri Lankan Tamils's liberation. Whatever he may be criticised for, it cannot be denied that the man has an inner fire and dedication and he is endowed with natural military abilities, both strategic and tactical. He has also proved that he is a keen observer of the nature of competitive and critical politics. He has proved his abilities in judging political events and his adroitness in responding to them.

"Secondly, he has created a highly disciplined, and dedicated cadres, a manifestation of which is inherent in what is called the 'cyanide cult.' Each regular member of the LTTE carries a cyanide pill and is pledged to committing suicide rather than being captured by the enemy.

"The third factor is the cult and creed of honesty in the disbursement and utilisation of resources. Despite long years spent in struggle, the LTTE cadres were known for their simple living, lack of any tendency to exploit the people and their operational preparedness.

"The fourth factor has been the LTTE's ability to upgrade its political and military capacities including technological inputs despite the constraints imposed on it by Sri Lankan forces and later by India.

"The fifth factor is a totally amoral and deadly violent approach in dealing with those the LTTE considers as enemies.

"The sixth factor is Prabhakaran's success in gathering around him senior advisers with diverse political, administrative and technological capacities, which contributed to effective training of his cadres, optimum utilisation of the military equipment which he had, and the structuring of an efficient command and control system."

What Rajiv Gandhi told V.P.Singh in mid-1989

IF NECESSARY, HE WOULD HELP PRABHAKARAN ACHIEVE TAMIL EELAM

Murasoli Maran interview with Coomi Kapoor INDIAN EXPRESS, December 16, 1997

DMK leader and Industries Minister Murasoli Maran has corroborated former Prime Minister V.P.Singh's statement before the Jain Commission that Rajiv Gandhi had in a discussion with him in mid-1989 told him that he would, if necessary, help LTTE chief V.Prabhakaran in securing an independent State of Eelam.

Justice M.C.Jain and some Congress M.P.s have questioned the truth of Singh's testimony and pointed out that Maran himself had not made any such claim before the Commission.

In an interview to THE INDIAN EXPRESS today,Maran, however alarified that if he did not speak before the Jain Commission and authenticate V.P.Singh's recollection of his conversation with Rajiv Gandhi, it was because he was not asked to do so. "I did not receive any summons from the Jain Commission", he clarified.

Maran says that Rajiv had asked him to open a dialogue with Prabhakaran through Karunanidhi because he was concerned about the growing understanding between Sri Lankan Prime Minister Premadasa and Prabhakaran, who had found a common goal in demanding the withdrawl of the Indian army from Sri Lanka.

Rajiv was upset that Premadasa and Prabhakaran were getting closer and he felt India's honour is involved", Maran recollects.

He asked me to urge Karunanidhi to speak to Prabhakaran and offer something more to satisfy him", says Maran.

Murasoli Maran

Maran pointed out to Rajiv that short of de jure sovereignty, by this stage the LTTE already had practically everything else.

They collected taxes, they had their own aourts and imposed punishments including capital punishment. Maran felt that short of (Tamil) Eelam, nothing would satisfy the LTTE. He cited the example of Cyprus where the Turkish army had been sent by the government to guard the Turkish majority portion of Cyprus. He even joked with Rajiv that if he became the father of Eelam it would be hara-kiri for the DMK. "The whole idea was very aaceptable to Rajiv", Maran says.

V.P. Singh

Rajiv Gandhi

The move code-named "DMK Initiative" eventually came to naught because MEA (Ministry of External Affairs) officials - when they learnt of Rajiv's nod to the plan - hastily scuttled the proposa In fact, an official who was asked by Rajiv to discuss the move with Maran described Maran as a "a very dangerous man" because he had convinced Rajiv......

Giving the sequence of events to his conversation with Rajiv, Maran recalls that it all started when Karunanidhi was sworn in as Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu in January 1989 and immediately afterwards he came to Delhi to pay a courtesy call on Rajiv.

Maran says, "We thought it would be a brief meeting, but it was a long discussion on why the North East Council settlement in Sri Lanka was not working out.".

Karunanidhi gave some suggestions and Rajiv made the amazing disclosure that former Chief Minister of the North East Council Varadaraja Perumal was now in Delhi and he said he would send him to meet Karunanidhi at Tamil Nadu House. Minister of State for External Affairs Natwar Singh and a joint secretary also met Karunanidhi the very next day.

Perumal said he would abide by the DMK leader's wishes and was amenable to Karunanidhi's suggestion that the LTTE be included in any settlement. Maran says he believes that some government officials later castigated Perumal for his easy compliance. Maran points out that in any case even Perumal, who was clearly the Indian government's protege, had raised the flag of Eelam.

Rajiv, according to Maran, was very enthusiastic, when Karunanidh told him a solution was possible in Sri Lanka but cautioned him against sending wrong signals, since the various departments of the Government of India, such as the Ministry of Defence, RAW, the High Commission in Sri Lanka, the PMO (Prime Minister's Office), and the MEA seemed to be working at cross purposes.

Since Karunanidhi could not go to Sri Lanka, it was agreed that Maran would head a three-member delegation and Rajiv named it "DMK I nitiative". The modalities of the secret mission were discussed only with a handful of key officials. Karunanidhi even talked of the composition of the team. Maran was to be leader, Gopalasamy and the late ex-MP Kandappan were to be the other members of the team. RAW and IB were supposed to provide safe passage to Sri Lanka for the team.

Nothing happened for quite a while. Then Rajiv met the DMK leaders at Madras airport on his way back from Tirupati and he brought up the subject again with the Chief Minister. Maran flew to Delhi the next day to discuss the matter further. This, according to Maran, was when the crucial two-hour meeting took place and Rajiv made it clear that he was willinq even to concede Eelam if necessary to Prabhakaran. Maran says he learnt to his surprise during his talks with Rajiv that Prabhakaran was quite friendly with Rajiv and he even once gifted Prabhakaran his bullet-proof vest. ❑

> "Rajiv Gandhi once gifted his bullet-proof vest to Prabhakaran"
>
> *- Murasoli Maran*

Prisoner linksChandraswami, to Rajiv Gandhi Killers

By R.BHAGWAN SINGH

Chennai, Nov. 26: A remand prisoner at the Poonamallee special jail undergoing trial in the Rajiv Gandhi assassination case has told the Jain Commission that the former Prime Minister's electioneering programme was made available to the hitsquad by none other than former Union minister Margaret Alva who was incharge of his tour arrangements.

The militant, J.Ranganath, claimed in an affidavit filed before the commission in response to summons that his colleagues Sivarasan and Subha had told him about Ms Alva's help in carrying out their mission.

He said Sivarasan and Subha were strangers to him until they barged into his house at gunpoint along with some others on the midnight of August 2, 1991 and demanded sanctuary. The house belonged to Anjanappa who was the brother of E.Aswath Narayana, a local congress leader and a close associate of Ms Margaret Alva, who had drafted Rajiv Gandhi's tour programme to include Sriperambudur, he added. He said: During Sivarasan and Subha's stay. I was told that they had T gathered Rajiv Gandhi's itinerary from Ms Margaret Alva."

Chandraswami

The militants had also spoken to Ranganath "about their connection with Jaina Muni(chadraswami) Ms Margaret Alva and Aswath Narayana . Sivarasan, while he was staying in my house, used to tell me that he expected Chandraswami to arrange for his safe passage from Bangalore. Sivarasan told me that Chandraswami would take him to Delhi and from there sent him to some foreign country. He added that he had to stay in my house till the time Chandraswami arranges to take him to Delhi.

It was based on Ranganath's information, that the Karnataka police tried to corner Sivaram and Subha at their hideout. "After I was arrested, I told everything to the police, but the CBI officials threatened me and harassed me not to tell all the facts".

He said: "The CBI was very reluctant to arrest the prime accused Sivaram and Subha alive when they were at Bangalore"

Another accused, Vicky alias Vigneswaran, had also given the CBI all the relevalent information about Sivaraman and Subha. However, instead of surrounding the hideout immediately, the CBI moved in only after the two committed suicide by consuming cyanide, Ranganath added.

The Indian Express
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 22, 1997

Jain's hollow labour

Thousands of pages but where is the evidence?

SUMMARIES of the actual report of the M. C. Jain Commission, tabled in Parliament on Thursday, read no better than the unsubstantiated allegations which have been aired in public by various politicians over the last three years. It is a disgrace that the expenditure of crores and years of investigation have produced words to fill 17 volumes but so little clarity and precision. The country has waited patiently for an exact reconstruction of the events and circumstances leading to the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991. What it has been given is a surfeit of careless words, fallacious reasoning and, despite the verbiage, huge gaps in the story. The purpose of a commission of inquiry is to get as close as possible to the truth. That purpose is defeated if it is unable to rise above the politics and emotion of the subject matter, if loose thinking takes the place of rigorous analysis, and if the essential facts are not separated from the waffle. Extracts published so far reveal all these shortcomings and are, therefore, not a recommendation for the full interim report or for the last part (the conspiracy angle) which is still awaited so, few people will look for enlightenment in them. The Jain volumes will end up as tombstones.

The sloppiness of the report is shocking. A gross example of careless and, therefore, dangerous language which has the effect of making conspirators of millions of ordinary people is the statement linking the assassination with "the deep nexus between the LTTE and the Tamils of Tamil Nadu". For lack of more specific findings the intellectually convenient but politically damaging word "tacit" is used to describe the DKM's support to the LTTE. From finding V. P. Singh myopic, the report leaps to the conclusion he was motivated. If the LTTE was already an anti-national force in 1984 according to the Commission, it ought to have delivered its view on whether tacit or other support given to the organisation by the Government of India between 1984 and 1987 had a bearing on the LTTE's later operations in India.

The political impact of the Jain Commission report takes attention away from two crucial questions. One concerns the mechanism for consultation between the Centre and the States in foreign policy issues which have a bearing on internal security and domestic politics. There is no doubt the federal system came under strin during the Centre's shifts of stance on the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka. Serious thought needs to be given to the matter of improving Centre - State cooperation in this area. The Intelligence Bureau is said by the Jain Commission to have perceived the highest threat to the life of Rajiv Gandhi at one stage and deliberately underestimated the threat at another. This is not the only occaion when security organisations have been suspected of altering their assessments according to the prevailing political wind. Independent judgement in the security asencier have never been highly prized by their political bosses. The one worthwhile thing in the Jain report is that it under-lines the high price paid for that.

National Heroes Week

Tamil National Heroes Week was observed not only in the liberated areas of Tamil Eelam, but also, as happens annualy, in several parts of the world. Dance, drama, and musical programmes eulogising the sense of self-sacrifice of the dead martyrs who give up their lives for the common good were held across the globe, from the United States of America to New Zealand, and in most European countries.

HOT SPRING presents here a collage of some of the events:-

Australia

London

USA

The Netherlands →

Norway

Germany

Observed all over the world

The Netherlands

Italy (Palermo)

New Zealand

West Australia

Italy (Napoli)

An American tourist gets to know the Gandhis of India

Gandhi

Imagine this - what would happen if Mrs.Sonia Gandhi one day says "Yes" and becomes the Prime Minister of India ?

An American tourist, as ignorant about India as most Americans are, visits this country and is confronted with the news: Mrs.Gandhi is the Prime Minister

"Is that so, I was under the impression that Mrs.Gandhi was dead, cut down by assassins as our John F.Kennedy was", the American says.

Indira Gandhi

"That's Mrs.Indira Gandhi", corrects his guide. "This Mrs.Gandhi is Mrs. Gandhi's daughter-in-law, whose husband was Mr.Gandhi and who was shot by assassins".

"I know Gandhi, yes,I do. I saw the Attenborough movie. Tremendously inspiring. But I thought Gandhi was killed by assassins a long time ago."

"You are confused", says the guide. "That is Mahatma Gandhi, we all love and respect him. However, this Mrs.Gandhi's husband's father is Mr.Feroze Gandhi, who was Mr.Nehru's son-in-law".

"Oh I see. And he was the Prime Minister", the American says, light dawning.

Rajiv Gandhi

"No ,no, Mr. Gandhi was not the PrimeMinister, his wife Mrs. Gandhi was the Prime Minister, and his son, Mr Gandhi was the Prime Minister, and his other son, Mr.Sanjay Gandhi could have been Prime Minister, had he not been killed".

"He was also shot by assassins ? "

"No, he was not , though some foul play is suspected",the guide says. "There was an inquiry commission appointed, but now it is forgoten. How many inquiry commisions can you have ?"

"Then who is this Mrs.Gandhi who is the Prime Minister?", the American wants to know.

"Ah. she is Mrs.Sonia Gandhi. She is Italian," the guide informs.

Sonia Gandhi

"Then her husband Mr.Gandhi was also an Italiansays.,the American says.

"No, he was an Indian. though he was not completely Hindu. His father, Mr.Gandhi who was married to Mrs.Gandhi, was a Parsi", the guide explains

"Who was his father?", the American asks.

"Mr.Gandhi's father ! Mr.Gandhi, I suppose. But he has got nothing to do with all this. He was not a Prime Minister, but Mr.Gandhi junior's father-in-law. who was Mr.Nehru, was Prime Minister. And Mr.Nehru's daughter was Prime Minister, but not his son-in-law, though his grandson was Prime Minister. He was the second Gandhi to be Prime Minister and third in the Nehru family, being second generation Nehru".

"And they are all Italians?", the American inquires.

"No, they are all Indians," the guide says, "Including Mrs. Gandhi, who is Italian but got an Indian passport after Mr.Gandhi became Prime Minister".

Maneka Gandhi

"Is Mr.Gandhi PrimeMinister, or Mrs.Gandhi," the American asks.

"Get this straight," says the guide. "First, it was Mr.Gandhi, then Mrs. Gandhi. However, before Mr.Gandhi, there was Mrs.Gandhi".

"Are there any more Gandhis?", the American wants to know.

"Yes, there is one more, but she is interested in animal welfare"

(Courtesy: INDIA-HOME & ABROAD, Diwalai issue, OctDec. '97.)

Culled from the Colombo Press

"THE TAMIL PEOPLE ARE A NATION STATE IN ALL BUT NAME"

Dr.G.Uswatte-Aratchi

writing in THE ISLAND, Sunday,December 7, 1997

"......One only deludes oneself by repeating, ad nauseam, that the LTTE is a fringe group. It is simply impossible for an enterprise of that magnitude to go on without the support of the vast majority of the Tamil people....

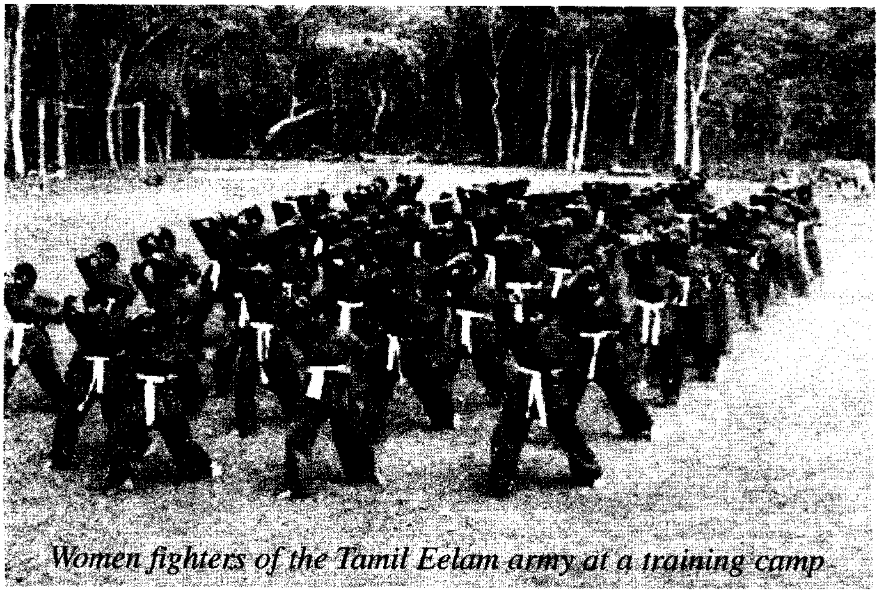
"When a people who imagine themselves a nation, to use Benedict Anderson's telling phrase, take up arms against the machinery of the State, there are three reactions. One, we saw in Biafra when the southern states wanted secession from the state of Nigeria and when Chechnya wanted to break away from Russia. The might of the military force of the government destroyed the movement for a separate state.

"The integrity of the Indian Union is maintained more by the might of the Indian armed forces than anything else.....

"The second we saw in Bangladesh and in Eritrea. In a short military struggle, the people of Bangladesh assisted by the Indian army seceded from Pakistan. In contrast, the people of Eritrea struggled for some forty years before they could emerge independent of a weakened state of Ethiopia.

"The third reaction, we see in Sudan and SRI LANKA. Central governments with poor military machines have been drawn into protracted highly destructive warfare with a people who resolutely want independence from them.......

"To maintain the territorial integrity of the country under one government, it would be necessary to crush militarily and totally the movement as was done in Nigeria and Russia. This is not feasible in Sri Lanka now. In the alternative, Tamil people must enjoy the same privileges in this country as they did in the first decade after independence, when they dominated commerce, the public administration, the learned professions and the universities......



Women fighters of the Tamil Eelam army at a training camp

"It is another illusion to believe that the political solution as envisaged now will "end the war and release resources for other uses". **The Tamil people of Sri Lanka are a nation state in all but name. They possess an army and a navy though they yet lack an air force. They have representation abroad in all principal capitals and conduct diplomatic business with much less ceremony and cost but more effectively than the Sri Lanka government. They have an excellent propaganda machine which is also supported by academics in high places.**

"The. idea of a nation state covering the geographical entity of Sri Lanka is a cherished idea among the Sinhalese but among few others in this country. **It is the right of the Tamil people to establish their own state if they so desire. One must accept that as a reality in this day and age and its consequences.**

"Little purpose is served by hiding one's head in the sand and denying that because one is liberal or thinks well of Tamils. It is as unrealistic as the claim that the Sinhalese are reasonable people and that the Tamil people should live among them in one state, because of that.

"Jaffna became an ethnically clean piece of land long before Korazdic and Milesovi tried that recipe in Serbia. **One ought to expect that within a year or two of declaring independence, Eelam would be admitted to the United Nations and no one should be so foolish as to expect that it would be Sri Lanka's friend...**

Culled from the Colombo Press

"AN EBULLIENT MILITARY SPOKESMAN WHO PUTS HIS FOOT IN HIS MOUTH"

Air Vice Marshal (retd.) HARRY GUNETILLEKE

writing in the WEEKEND EXPRESS of December 13.14.1997.

"........The ground situation today, at the beginning of the eighth month of this operation ("Jaya Sikurui") is that we have lost over 1,200 militiamen and policemen, with another 5000 injured, a third of whom are likely to be left out of battle (LOB) for some considerable period of time. This would mean that at approximately the halfway mark on the goal to reach Kilinochchi, we have lost approximately 60 men per mile with a further 85 not being able to participate in the forward march through serious injury.

"As for material losses, by the end of the fourth month, one dozen tanks and armoured personnel carriers (APCs) were captured/ damaged/ destroyed, together with the seizure of an unnamed quantity of artillery guns and four or five 25 pounder guns, the blowing up of an ammunition dump and considerable number of vehicles such as ambulances, trucks etc., all to the value of over a quarter million rupees. By the end of the fifth month, a further tank was destroyed, two APCs captured and two helicopters were damaged in addition to the seizure of a number of 81 m.m. and 60m.m. mortars, heavy machine guns, over one million rounds of ammunition, more than 10,000 mortar rounds, approximately 1000 rocket propelled grenades (RPGs) and over 6000 hand grenades.

"Now, in the seventh month of this operation,we have hit a new low with the debacle at Kanakarayankulam early this month, where over 160 are believed to be killed or missing and an unspecified number injured, perhaps counted in hundreds.

"The writer will welcome any corrections to the figures quoted above from our ebullient military spokesman who contributes his little bit to the war effort even if he puts his foot [illegible] his mouth, with statements such as "the Tigers are covered and are unable to move their weapons or injured as all roads leading to Mullaitivu from the west have been effectively blocked" (at a briefing on 2nd October), and then again a week earlier, saying that "the Tigers are in total disarray north of Puliyankulam and there is no effective leadership". Alas, this is the heavy price one has to pay for that oft repeated foolish statement by his political master that "not one inch of land captured will be given up ".

"We have advocated many a time in these columns when this operation got stuck in Puliyankulam entreating the battle hierarchy to "get the troops back from where they started out and set out a second time when the required number of troops are found for this colossa task", but vanity and not good sense prevailed with the result that Operation Jayasikurui is meandering its way through monsoon and mortars on an ad hoc basis. As to when it will reach its final objective is anybody's guess bu we have it from our omnipotent politica general that it must be completed by 31 December this year, when the earlie target of reaching the deadline by the third quarter, misfired.

"One hand is stained with blood, the other with corruption"

From the speech in the Sri Lankan Parliament by United National Party General Secretary Gamini Atukorale on 16 December 1997

Ratwatte: "I will shake hands".

"Mr. Deputy Chairman, the honourable M.P. who spoke before me, Amal Sena dhilankara spoke with a lot of expectation. He said the war will end soon. Similarly, THE SUNDAY TIMES published last week on its front page: JAFFNA LINKS BY FEBRUARY 4". "I will shake hands with Prabhakaran after we beat him, says Deputy Defence Minister Ratwatte".

Very good. One hand is stained with blood. The other with corruption....

"When we discuss the votes of the Finance Ministry we talk of many things dealing with the country's economy. The pivot around which corruption revolves in this country today is the Finance Ministry, I'm sorry to say. The Minister- Chandrika Kumaratunga and the Deputy Minister Prof. G.L.Pieris must, in a sense, be responsible for this state of affairs....

Culled from the Colombo Press

HOW SRI LANKAN TROOPS WALKED INTO A TIGER TRAP !

Decoyed by dummy camp at Mankulam

Columnist **ROY DENISH**

writing in THE SUNDAY LEADER December 14, 1997

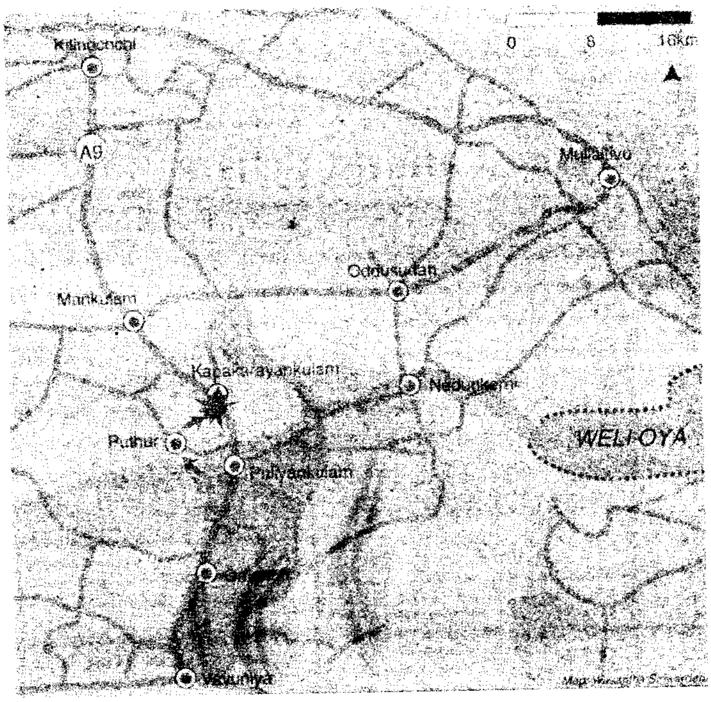
"With only two weeks more for the year to end, what would have been a decisive assault on the Tiger rebels, seven kilometres northwest of Kanakarayankulam, turned out to be a dreadful disaster for the PA government last week.......

"On December 3, Deputy Defence Minister Anuruddha Ratwatte with his military aides flew to Vavuniya Joint Operations Command. The Minister held talks with the overall commander of the operations Maj.Gen.Sri Lal Weerasuriya and other military officials in charge of the attack which was to be carried out in the early hours of December 4.

"Along with the minister the military leaders weighed the pros and cons and the minister flew back to Colombo to attend the Emergency debate (in Parliament).

"Soon after the minister was airborne, the military officials sat in the JOH office in Vavuniya and mapped out the final plans. There were only 10 officers present at the meeting. They took precautions during the discussions; nobody was allowed inside unauthorisedly. The tea boy too was told not to enter the room unless specific requests were made.

"The meeting was chaired by Maj.Gen. Sri Lal Weerasuriya, 53 Division Commander Brigadier Wasantha Perera and his deputy Gamini Hettiaratahi. The meeting was also chaired by 56 Division Commander. Precautions were mainly to prevent the secrets being leaked to the Tigers.



"After the meeting the field commanders were informed about the mission and were told to ready their troops. It was past midnight. The weather was gloomy. A thin drizzle began to fall.

"Two hours before dawn, troops under cover of semi darkness backed up with heavy arms and artillery, broke out from three points. Two columns from Nainamadhu and Puthur began the thrust towards Kanakarayankulam. The commandos were asked to clear the route for the armoured cars, tanks and the artillery. The main task of the column from Nainamadhu was to attract the attention of the Tiger rebels camped on the A9 highway.

"Soldiers from the 53 Division simultaneously began their forward march towards Kanakarayankulam. Just two and a half kilometres away from Puthur lies the village Mankulam where the LTTE had one of its biggest bases. The main target was to destroy the base and move towards Kanakarayankulam.

"The soldiers of 53 Division and commandos specially trained in jungle warfare were assigned to take on the Mankulam base.

"But the troops little knew the Tigers were waiting to confrontthem face to face.

"Ironically, the operation was launched only after air intelligence units provided images of a major build-up at Mankulam and surrounding areas. To draw the attention of the troops, the LTTE had only to build a makeshift base and display dummies.

"The LTTE cadres knew the movements of the commandos marching towards Mankulam from Puthur. While the commandos were inching their way through the muddy paths, an LTTE column too moved up but the troopers knew nothing of their moves.

"Every step the soldiers took was radioed to LTTE counter operations chief Banu who was stationed a few kilometres from Kanakarayankulam. Just three hours after dawn the troopers reached Mankulam.

"The commandos did not realise that they had fallen into a trap. The LTTE rebels had the commandos surrounded and bullets began to rain down

"Commandos fought desperately to get out of the trap. They sent frantic SOS messages to Joint Operations Hq. in Vavuniya. The Vavuniya JOH ordered the troopers from Nainamadhu to rush to the area. They reached Puthur and attempted to rush to Mankulam but they too came under heavy attack by the Tigers.

"Since dark clouds had shrouded the areas, no Air Force helicopter gunships could provide the ground troops with air cover. However by afternoon a small group of commandos was able to escape from the trap. The LTTE cadres too followed the commandos, attacking the rear. While the LTTE were moving towards Puthur from undisclosed destinations, they fired mortars at Puthur forcing the reinforcements to beak down.

"At Mankulam, the bodies of 123 soldiers lay on the damp earth, soaking it with blood. Apart from the dead there were 20 more bodies in a highly decomposed state.

"Thirty six LTTE cadres including 10 women were killed in this confrontation. The news of the deaths of the soldiers was kept under wraps to prevent the Opposition party members involved in the Emergency debate from making capital out of it. The news broke out only late that afternoon.

"The attack was a major setback for the government. Operation headquarters carefully worded the situation report. No international news agency correspondents were able to break the news until late afternoon. The attack was highly embarrassing for the government as only 24 hours before the attack, Deputy Defence Minister Ratwatte had returned from the front.

WIPING OUT OF U.S TRAINED COMMANDOS: BUT GREEN BERETS BACK AGAIN

Imran Vittachi *writing in THE SUNDAY TIMES, Colombo of Dec.21:*

American Green Berets have carried out yet another low-profile mission to Sri Lanka, this time to plan further joint-training exercises with the army, informed sources said.

A team of military planners from the United States Special Forces, having spent three weeks at undisclosed locations with their Sri Lankan counterparts, were due to fly home over the weekend, the sources told THE SUNDAY TIMES.

The visit by the Green Berets was in no way connected to the recent ambush along Highway A9 in the North, in which the LTTE wiped out up to 150 mainly U.S.trained elite commandos, the sources added. Citing security reasons, they declined to say how many Green Berets had taken part in the latest tour-of-duty to the country.

[illegible] the U.S. trained commandos

"The most important thing is the security of these Americans", a source told THE SUNDAY TIMES.

According to reports, Americans in Sri Lanka have been alerted to possible reprisals from the LTTE after the U.S.State Department on October 8 branded it as a terrorist group. In the wake of the Twin Tower bombing in October a week later, rumours that the LTTE was now targeting the Green Berets intensified but American diplomats have denied such claims. The U.S. Embassy has, however, confirmed that "temporary duty" military personnel were staying at the Galadari and Hilton hotels near the Twin Towers when the truck bomb exploded.

Since March 1996 Special Forces, under code-name "Operation Balanced Style", have been conducting a series of jungle and sea warfare training exercises with the SLAF.

Cry not Sri Lanka, but weep!

by Wg. Cdr. Mark Seneviratne

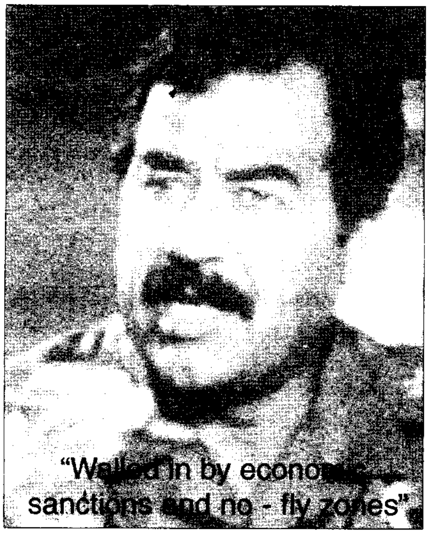
After the recent Galadari bomb blast many people seemed to have tinkeredwith the theory that the LTTE (if they had been responsible for the bomb) activated it to target the American Green Berets who had been booked into that hotel. It was said that these Americans were training Sri Lankan troops, particularly the commandos of 53 Division of the army, now deployed in operation Jaya Sikurui.

It is however unlikely that the Tigers would have planned to target the Green Berets simply because they would have been well aware of how futile it could be for American or for that matter any Western military, to try to train Sri Lankan soldiers to effectively combat the LTTE.

Ofcourse it is not that the techniques, tactics, training and technology imparted by the Americans could be inadequate or sub-standard. In fact the LTTE may be quite aware that the Green Berets could be among the best combatants in the world. Yet the main and highly vital minus factor in the case of the Americans or any other western military men is that they cannot grasp the psyche and the mind of the Asians including of course the LTTE.

That was probably one of the main reasons for the Vietminh vanquishing the victory ventures of the Americans in Vietnam, and also for the anarchical army of Aideed of African Somalia, sending the special forces of the United States military, back home pronto, so to say.

The problem lies mainly in the totally different psyche, thinking, and attitude of the western mind in relation to that of the Asian. In the case of the former, such as the mind of the Green Berets, it could be said to be precise, exact and predictable, whereas the same could not be said of the Asian mind which may be described as crafty, devious and unpredictable.



"Walled in by economic sanctions and no - fly zones"

It was the Asian psyche which sent the Portuguese round in circles before they could get anywhere near Kotte. It is the one that promises a person his laundered clothes sharp at nine the following Monday, but all the while has not the slightest doubt that it would be impractical to do so! It is the mind that says... he is going to Kandy and ends up in Galle! It is the mind which a few days ago caused nearly two hundred deaths and missing-in-action at Mankulam to mainly commandos, who are said to have been trained by the Green Berets to successfully fight the Tigers!

No doubt those commandos may have been taught the best possible commando tactics and technology by the Green Berets, but it would have not been of much use unless it was taught in relation to possible reaction of the Tigers. Thus the Green Berets may have indicated possible LTTE reactions to given situations, and how the commandos should counter them.

Possible LTTE reactions however may have been based by the Green Berets, on their western mental deduction process and not on the Asian mentality. That of course would only be natural. But in reality the Tiger reaction at Mankulam a few days ago, could have been seen to be characteristic of the Asian mentality. The LTTE lured, trapped and decimated those evidently surprised commandos of 53 division who, according to western thinking and calculations, may have been trained to expect something totally different to the scenario that the LTTE contrived for them.

The inability of the western mind to comprehend the Asian mentality could have been seen in the story titled 'The Palace Mirrors' which appeared in the Time magazine of 08 Dec 97. The feature began with: 'For a man in a box, Saddam Hussein manages to find an amazing amount of wiggle room. He is walled in by economic sanctions and no-fly zones and international inspectors, but he still pops out with one ploy after another, calculated to thwart the United Nations and inflate his image in the Arab world, like a stage magician he fills his act with grand gestures and hooplas, but on close inspection the show can be seen for what it is: illusion'. Students of Sri Lankan history will recall that similar worded despatches had been sent by the British governors to London, about the Kandyan kings.

The top Tiger evidently acted the stage magician, created an illusion and then lured the commandos into a trap which resulted in totally unacceptable deaths. As this columnist has been urging all along, if we are to retain foreign trainers for our troops, they should be Asians such as Vietnamese, Cambodians, Malaysians, Bangladeshis etc.

Be that as it may, why have we had so many - too many - military men, apart from those commandos, dying in this war, particularly after April 1995? Could it be because of something perceived years ago by Mao Ze Dong and described as: 'When politics developed to a certain stage beyond which it cannot proceed by the usual means, war breaks out to sweep the obstacles from the way....... when the obstacle is removed and the political aim is attained, the war will stop. But if the obstacle is not completely swept away, the war will have to continue till the aim is fully accomplished....It can therefore be said that 'politics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed.'

Indeed war did break out in July '83 when there was an attempt to sweep away the embarrassing obstacle made up of the TULF and the Tamils who had been gaining international attention. Today the obstacles seem to be manifold. There are for instance the retarded economic growth; the heavy constraints on the political package; soaring cost of living; engulfing corruption; human rights violations; and such like which would all have to be removed if the war is to stop.

Meanwhile far too many soldiers have been sacrificed due to politics -with bloodshed such as in recent times, operation Leap Forward, Riviresa sans a land based MSR, and now the one pushing the preparation of the premier path to the peninsula so that the priority of the political package could be met. Unlike war without politics which could be planned and executed economically, these politics- with-bloodshed has cost the country billions and billions of rupees propelling the cost of living; to unbearable heights, as well as spreading unemployment far and wide. The number of troops who have been killed in all those politics-with-bloodshed operations, either directly in the fighting or indirectly in crashed aircraft and sunken ships on their way to keep operation Riviresa rolling, could well be not only shocking, but also as saddening. Saddening because many of them did not really have to die! Even more saddening because among them have been said to be saviours sent to war by their siblings, because there had been no alternative to save the family from starvation.

> 'When politics developed to a certain stage beyond which it cannot proceed by the usual means, war breaks out to sweep the obstacles from the way..... when the obstacle is removed and the political aim is attained, the war will stop. But if the obstcle is not completely swept away, the war will have to continue till the aim is fully accomplished....It can therefore be said that 'poltics is war without bloodshed while war is politics with bloodshed.'

That in itself is a tragedy so full of pathos into which the hitherto strong and self respecting Sri Lankan society seems to have been reduced! With unemployment spreading faster than the fires in Indonesia and the cost of living soaring into space, village families in particular, evidently have no alternative than to send - while submerged in sorrow - a son to the war because they could share his salary not only while he fought at the battle front, making them proud of him, but even after he had been buried in the battlefield, leaving so much sorrow and sadness in their souls !

Such is the calamity which has caught this country in its cruel clutch, to a large extent because of politics- with-bloodshed. With so many political obstacles to be cleared and possibly, more raising their ugly heads, the war and politics-with-bloodshed are likely to continue for a very long time, while more and more sons of Sri Lanka will be slain on the battlefields.

Wouldn't that be so sad for Sri Lanka which not so long ago has been so proud of her rich culture and princely society? Wouldn't it also be so pathetic for Sri Lanka, to so helplessly watch her sons being sacrificed in such sordid circumstances?

Perhaps the time has come for Sri Lanka to weep rivers of tears, because even the days of crying seem to have deserted her.

Tamil protest against human rights abuses

COLOMBO, Dec 10 (Reuters) - The parents of young Tamils who disappeared during military operations in northern Sri Lanka joined hundreds of people in the capital Colombo on Wednesday to protest against alleged human rights abuses.

"For 15 months I have searched from camp to camp but I have been unable to locate my son, Sivathambi Sivakumar, who was taken in during a rounding up operation in Jaffna," said Sikadiran Sivanathambi, a Tamil resident of Jaffna.

"I have sold everything I owned to look after my son's wife and two children. Today I join this demonstration hoping that some action will be taken to locate my son," he told Reuters. Protesters, including dozens of schoolchildren, shouted slogans and waved placards during the demonstration near Colombo's main railway terminal to mark International Human Rights Day.

"NEITHER REST NOR TRANQUILITY UNTIL TAMILS ARE GRANTED THEIR RIGHTS"

Gangesar Gajendrakumar Ponnambalam

What you call 'terrorism', we call a liberation struggle; Whom you call 'terrorists', we call 'freedom fighters'; what we call 'State terrorism', you call 'maintaining law and order'; what we call 'State terrorism', you call 'defending the State'; Where does it end?

What is imperative is that people from all walks of life, people with all points of view work together, with as much an open mind as is permissible. Or else, we will continue in this despicable course of mass suicide, with no gain but only mass destruction. How easily men could make things better if only they could get themselves to try and work together.

It is my opinion that calling the LTTE 'terrorists', serves no purpose whatsoever, other than cheap political gain. 'Terrorism' is a word that indicates that you have already judged the situation, given it a bad name and invoked a political swearword. This is of no help in a situation which is crying out for conflict resolution.

To understand the LTTE, and all those who sympathise with them, we must begin by examining more neutrally, its politically motivated use of violence. If we define terrorism as a crime, it tells us nothing. Of course it "is" crime, in that it uses 'illegitimate' means to achieve its ends. But this is precisely because the State's legitimacy is what is in question.

As a whole, all the people living in this world, especially those in this island, have had kind words for men of violence, who fought and, we believe, secured, many of our present liberties. Why then, are we resistant to those who use similar violent means today ?

I am a Tamil. I was born one. I have lived and continue to live as one. And I most certainly will die as one. It is this fact, which enables me to stand up, along with the many thousands of my Tamil brothers and sisters, and fight for rights which are long overdue. I, unlike many of my colleagues, have an added advantage when I say it humbly, but with, I hope, becoming pride, no one has a better right than I have, for this is a cause I have inherited and a cause for which my family have been willing to sacrifice their lives. And, it is a cause for which I too, am prepared to die.

We want equal rights, because without them our disabilities as a people will be permanent. I know this sounds revolutionary to the Sinhalese in this country, and makes them fear the Tamils. But this fear, cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the only solution, which will guarantee racial harmony and freedom for all.

Tamil nationalism is something which is real, and not imaginary. We feel very strongly, that we are a distinct People and comprise a Nation with our own history, culture and land. We want the power to determine our own future. We want recognised, our invaluable right to self-determination. The sooner we all recognise this, and come to terms with this, the better it is for all of us who inhabit this beautiful island.

We, as Tamils, had no alternative but to fight. For many years, we have shown amazing patience. We have sometimes given you our Sinhala brothers, the feeling that we liked the way we were being treated. Gone, I say, are those days. We are now impatient with anything less than freedom, justice and equality.

It would be fatal for Sri Lanka to overlook the urgency of the moment and to underestimate the determination of the Tamils. This sweltering heat of the Tamils' legitimate discontent will not pass until there is an invigorating breeze of freedom, equality and justice. Those who hope that the Tamils needed to blow off steam, and will be content after a while, will have a rude awakening if this island returns to business as usual.

There will be neither rest nor tranquillity until the Tamils are granted their right to self-determination. The whirlwinds of revolt will continue to shake the foundation of this island, until the bright day of justice emerges. We cannot, and will not turn back. There are those who are asking, "when will you be satisfied ?" To them I say:

We can never be satisfied, as long as the Tamils are the victims of the unspeakable horrors of State brutality. No, no, we are not satisfied, and we will not be satisfied until justice rolls down like waters, and right courses like a mighty stream. But when that day comes into being, those who are today fighting in this desperate cause will stop grinding their teeth and flashing their eyes, as they are doing today. The anger and hatred that nene them of strife will cease. And success will bring a mellow, genial air and, by altering the mood to suit the new circumstances, will preserve and consolidate in tolerance and goodwill what has been gained by conflict.

The Tamil Nation, like all other humble people, has a dream, that one day it will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed; "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.

The Tamil Nation has a dream, that one day, even its homeland in the North and the East of this island, a desert state sweltering with the heat of injustice and oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice. The Tamil Nation has a dream, that one day, its children will be able to join hands with their Sinhala counterparts, and walk together as sisters and brothers.

This is our hope and this is our faith. It is true that the course which the Tamil Nation has chosen, has caused many a hardship, to all those who inhabit the island. Many a person's life has been lost. I make no excuses, for I have none, except that consecutive Sinhala governments have given the Tamils no other option.

For over twenty years since the dawn of independence there has been a resurgence of post-independent nationalism that was largely proSinhala and anti Tamil, resulting in discrimination and violations of human rights. Faced with growing discrimination in the field of education and employment; death and destruction hy repeated antiTamil riots; State-aided colonisation of Tamil areas, the Tamils moved towards a consensus which was democratically expressed in the Vaddukoddai Resolution of 1976 and was approved by an overwhelming Tamil population of over 75% at the General elections of 1977. It was a clear and democratic mandate to establish "Tamil Eelam"

"Our peaceful protests were broken up by physical violence. . . .

"Our leaders were stoned and kicked by hooligans. . . .

"Agreements and pacts were torn to pieces. . . .

Consecutive Sinhala governments failed to take note of the conviction of the Tamils towards this cause. At times our cries for freedom and justice fell on deaf ears. We were ignored again and again.

However, with the advent of the 1983 holocaust, the democratic politics of the Tamil people took a dramatic change, to that of a militant phase, which continues today, fifteen years on!

The civil war in our country points to so much disaster and ruin, not only for the Tamils but also to all others in the island, that we all should feed the dangerous course of Nation suicide we are heading towards, and urgently change our course. We are not asking our Sinhala brothers and sisters to give up any of their rights or their freedom. All we are asking is, to recognise what is rightfully ours; our rights and our freedom. Treat us like the way you treat yourselves. Is that too much to ask ?

In the past, the Tamil people have been kicked around from pillar to post. We have been subjected to despicable racial violence. Our homes have been burnt. Our libraries, the very core of our being as an intelligentsia have been reduced to ashes. We have seen our sisters and mothers raped. We have seen our brothers and fathers stoned. Amidst such horrors we chose to fight out our grievances through peaceful protests and negotiations. But nothing.... I say nothing came of them.

Our peaceful protests were broken up by physical violence by the state on our leaders. Our leaders were stoned and kicked by hooligans, while the state allowed the police to do nothing to protect them. Our peaceful negotiations with consecutive governments, which resulted in agreements and pacts, were torn to pieces at the first signs of protests from the opposition benches.

Our youth that slave drove themselves, and educated themselves, lost all hope in entering higher education, when standardisation was brought. Our Tamil brothers, after years of hard work, blood, toil, tears and sweat, found a glass ceiling beyond which they could not climb in their professions.

But worst of all, our very existence as a distinct people was undermined by the loss of our language rights. asked to adopt and shut-up !

In short, we wereasked to adopt and shut up!

But we didn't. Instead, we grew tired of injustice, and we grew impatient with oppression. Our cries for equality, justice and freedom fell on deaf ears, which gave our braver brothers and sisters the courage to take matters into their own hands, and to fight fire with fire. This was not a course that we opted to choose, this was a course that we were forced to resort to, because we as a people realised that our aims could not be achieved through politics alone. We realised that our aims could not be achieved within the present system or anything that is remotely like it, simply because the government failed, and continue to fail to negotiate our grievances.

Our Sinhala brothers must understand, that our anger is not against them as a Nation. But it is against a state which is supposed to represent and protect all its citizens, for it has failed to represent us protect us. We, the Tamils recognise that the Sinhala Nation are a distinct people. A people with a glorious past. An enviable heritage and tradition. We recognise that the Sinhala people have their own culture and most of all, their own traditional homelands. We also ffilly recognise that they have every right to choose their own destiny, and plot their own future, All we are asking is for you to recognise that we, too, are like you and recognise in us what we recognise in you.

To do so, will result in bringing the bloodshed in this island to a complete stop. To do so, will result in the people on this island to live in peace, equality and in racial harmony.

(The author of this article is a grandson of G.G.Ponnambalam Q.C. and son of G.G.Ponnambalam(Jr.).

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SOUTH AFRICAN TAMILS WRITE TO PRESIDENT MANDELA

Kumbesan Sandrasegaran and others

President Mandela

Dear Sir,

We write to you as South Africans who are very concerned about the ongoing oppression of tamils in Sri-Lanka. The treatment of tamils in Sri-Lanka is similar to the treatment of blacks during the dark days of apartheid.

However, recent statements made by your officials reflect a number of misconceptions and missing conceptions about the situation in Sri-Lanka.

We would like you to consider the following seriously:

● Sri Lanka has been the only South Asian country that has maintained economic ties with the (Old) South Africa during the dark days of apartheid. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh found it morally wrong to deal with the criminal regime but Sri-Lanka had no feelings about the oppressed people of South Africa.

● The Tamil people have tried for 30 years to solve the problems of Ceylon (Sri-Lanka) in a peaceful manner. Post-independent governments have suppressed non-violent protests against discrimination and have applied violent force on peaceful political establishments that sought a measure of autonomy for the minority tamils Like the ANCís Umkoto-wesizwe, the tamil youth had no alternative but to take up arms when all peaceful means failed.

● **The Tamils and sinhalese have lived in separate kingdoms for more than 2000 years until the British colonialist found it convenient to group them into one country called Ceylon. This marriage has been a complete disaster from the start, filled with abuse of the less powerful and the tamils are asking for a divorce. The British handed over South Africa to the Boers and black South Africans had even more misery under the Boers until they got true liberation. The tamils are going through the same process.**

● Fertile land has been taken away from traditional homelands of the tami and the sinhalese have been settled there with armed protection and financial assistance. Tamils have been made foreigners in their own homelands. Similar action was done by the Boers under the group areas act and its land policies.

● Sri-lankan army and politicians have committed a number of terrorist acts, including the killing of opponents, and have blamed the responsibility for these acts on the liberation movements in a move to discredit them. The ANC was similarly discredited by apartheid govts.

● Tamils are required to carry identity cards at all times. You will recall the horror of the pass laws in the Old South Africa and the suffering it brought on our people.

● Detention of tamils without trial and death as a result of torture is ongoing in Sri-Lanka. Mutilated bodies of victims of Sri-Lanka oppression have surfaced in all parts of the country. You may recall the pain we all felt on hearing of the death of Steve Biko during detention. However there are thousands of Steve Bikoís in Sri-Lanka.

● All news reported from Sri-Lanka is controlled strictly by the military. Reporters have been barred from going independently into tamil areas and assessing the situation for themselves. The few international reports that surface on the media are based on guided tours of the war areas by the military. These reporters are only shown what the military want them to see.

Thus the whole world has been blinded by the events of Sri-Lanka. Amnesty international and other human rights groups have been limited in their work.

● During the apartheid era, reporters risked their lives to report the events in the townships and these reports convinced the rest of the world of the atrocities in South Africa. Imagine if the Soweto uprising did not receive any coverage internationally.

● **Just as the ANC and many other liberation movements in Africa were labeled as terrorist organization by some western powers with**

interest in South Africa, the LTTE has been labeled as a terrorist movement by USA which has significant military and economic interests in Sri-Lanka. These interest include the Voice of America repeaters for the south asian region and potential naval bases.

● Indiscriminate aerial bombing, naval shelling, mortar firing is ongoing in Sri-Lanka today. Even the apartheid regimes did not resort to such low levels against their enemies. On a number of occasions, the Sri Lankan air force has been blamed for the death of civilians in private and public dwellings. Notable incidents include the bombing of St. Peter's Church in Navaly resulting in the death of scores of civilians (captured on video), and the subsequent bombing of a school in Nagar Kovil in which many children were killed. These incidents are not isolated. Many villages are indiscriminately bombed, and even hospitals have taken direct hits. Even recently the Sri Lankan Air Force has been blamed for the death of nine civilians. These reports make us believe that the Sri Lankan Air Force has been used to attack Tamil areas indiscriminately. In addition to aerial bombing, shelling has caused death and injury to thousands of people. If these deaths were the result of inaccuracy in the artillery, then the Sri Lankan government should have realised it a long ago, and should not have continued to use them. Once again, this leaves us with the impression that shelling may also have been used indiscriminately against targets that included residential areas. Many Tamils regard the actions of the Security Forces as deliberately designed to terrorize the people.

● Past and present Sri-Lankan government have imposed the language of the oppressor(sinhala) on the oppressed tamil people. Tamils, not knowing sinhala are treated rudely or turned away in government offices. This parallels the treatment of non-Afrikaner speakers by some barbaric Afrikaner civil servants during the dark days in our history. SL govt. boast that tamils is one of the official languages of the country, but there is wide difference between the law and its application.

● **It is well known that apartheid governments bought off a number of reporters in the foreign media that have criticized the freedom struggle, including the ANC, as a bunch of terrorists without any support of the masses. This technique has been utilized by the Sri-Lankan government. A recent report by a Canadian reporter about the support for the liberation struggle among the tamil refugees in Canada was found to contain a number of lies.**

● Just as the apartheid government financed and provided military training to opportunist black parties in South Africa, the Sri-Lankan government has done the same with opportunist tamil parties in Sri-Lanka. The SL government is quick to point out that there are tamil parties (opportunists) who are willing to work with the government to bring about peace.

● At the United Nations Commission on Human Rights on 9th of April 1997, 53 NGOís called for the withdrawal of Sri Lankaís occupying forces from the tamil homeland and for the recognition of ëthe right of the Tamil people to choose their own political and national statusí. (Appendix A)

On 9th of August 1995, 21 NGOís declared at the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities "During the past twelve years, the UN Commission on Human Rights and the Sub Commission have heard hundreds of statements expressing grave concern at the situation prevailing in the island of Sri Lanka. The record shows that it was the oppressive actions of successive Sri Lanka governments from as early as 1956 and in 1958, and again in 1961 and again with increasing frequency from 1972 to 1977 and culminating in the genocidal attacks of 1983 that resulted in the rise of the lawful armed resistance of the Tamil people." (Appendix B)

● **The 120,000 members of the SL armed forces are almost exclusively Sinhalese and utilize 20 % of the national budget, similar to the white dominated armed forces of the old South Africa.**

According to the report of the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances (E/CN. 4/1997/34,13 December 1996) submitted to the 53rd Sessions of the UN Commission on Human Rights in March this year, Sri Lanka with almost 11,500 disappearance cases outstanding, for the period 1980 to 1996, is second only to Iraq in the number of unsolved disappearances in the world.

● Just as in South Africa, peace and stability will not come to any part of the world by encouraging the rule of one people by another. Neither will it come by turning a blind eye to the continuing genocidal attack by Sri Lanka on the Tamil people. It is legitimization and recognition that will pave the way for negotiation on an equal footing - and the resolution of an armed conflict which has taken an increasingly heavy toll in human lives and suffering during the past fifteen years and more. Peace has been achieved in SA since the unbanning of the ANC.

● **While the Sri Lankan government may regard the operations in Sri Lanka as a war against separatist terrorists, the Tamils view it as a liberation struggle or fight for self determination. It should be mentioned here that in 1976, all major Tamil political parties in Sri Lanka formed an alliance "Tamil United Liberation Front" (TULF) and declared that they would seek a separate state for the Tamils in the north and east. The TULF won the 1977 general elections with an overwhelming majority. In the absence of a referendum on the issue, this may be regarded as a signal that the Tamils did want a separate state.**

● Human rights groups including Amnesty International have continued to express concern over the situation in Sri Lanka. Both the Sri Lankan Security Forces, and the LTTE have been blamed for violations. While the LTTE has been blamed for its treatment of Tamils who it regards as traitors, and the killing of Sinhalese civilians in the border villages, the security forces have been blamed for many cases of extra judicial killings, rape, torture and a record number of disappearances. Despite the ban on media, some of these incidents have surfaced. Of these, the news of the rape and murder of a school girl in Jaffna, the killing of those who went to the army camp to seek her whereabouts , and the rape and the horrible murder of a mother whose private parts were blown up by grenades, reveal the terror that the civilians are facing in the areas currently occupied by the Sri Lankan army. Last month the security forces have been implicated in the killing of a Christian priest. Most of these serious human rights violations have taken place in areas outside the presence of media and independent observers, and it may be difficult to bring those responsible to justice as people are unlikely to come forward to give evidence against the security forces. Even in the capital Colombo, arbitrary arrests based mainly on ethnicity have taken place. In many cases people believe that the arrests were made by the police in order to extort money from the arrested person.

- **Our beloved President, you are the symbol of struggle against evil and a symbol of freedom and hope. Mrs. Chandrika Kumaranatunga is hunting for trophies. What is more rewarding than to get the most incorruptible and courageous fighter against injustice to put the stamp of approval on her atrocious and vicious acts against a long suffering tamil minority, who simply want to be masters of their own destiny. Lying and getting away with it is relatively easy for her. Journalists are not allowed into the Tamil areas under army occupation, so the outside world does not know the enormities of the crime.**

- Mrs. Kumaranatunga is scheming to use the upcoming 50th anniversary of British departure from Ceylon to invite world leaders and proclaim it is a tacit acceptance of her policies of ethnic decimation. The tamils have nothing to celebrate. We are sure that you have courage and wisdom to tell Mrs. Kumaranatunga that a person like you who has passed through the baptism of fire in the fight for racial justice to take part in a charade to celebrate 50 years of ethnic iniquity is sacrilegious. Please tell her to "Let the tamil people go."

We also appeal to you to use your enormous influence and expertise to solve the problems in Sri-Lanka through peaceful means. An offer from South Africa to mediate the conflict in South Africa and to set up a Truth and Reconciliation committee would be welcome by all peace loving citizens of Sri-Lanka. We believe that a lasting solution to the conflict in Sri Lanka can only be reached through peaceful means. Given the degree of mistrust that exists between the warring parties, we believe that any negotiations between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE will be successful, if and only if they are conducted with the assistance of committed expert international mediators like South Africa. ❑

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Kalutara Killings: Amnesty Concern

Amnesty International has appealed to Sri Lanka's Minister of Justice to order a full and impartial inquiry into the killing of three Tamil detainees on 12 December at Kalutara prison, south of the capital. Colombo.

In its letter to Professor G.L.Peris, the human rights organization expressed concern for the safety of other detainees who witnessed the killing and are currently under guard by prison .staff who may have been involved in the act. Amnesty International urges that all necessary steps be taken to prntect these witnesses.

During a magisterial inquiry into the killings, several detainess who reportedly saw the killings refused to give evidence out of fear for their lives. To Amnesty International's knowledge, those responsable have not yet been identified.

Muthulingam Dharmalingam and Shanmugaraja Sivanesan, from Jaffna, and Sharif Jeban, a displaced person from Mannar, were among 137 Tamil detainess held at Kalutara prison. The three were reportedly hacked to death in front of ward D at around lpm on 12 December by a group of Sinhalese common criminal prisoners in what appears to have been a premeditated attack.

Prison staff and army personnel deployed at the prison appear to have failed to take measures to protect the Tamil detainess at the time and, according to same report, were even actively involved in the attack which lasted more than an hour.

According to some sources, prison staff had opened the gate to Ward D around 1 l am and ignored pleas made in the next two hours by several of the Tamil detainess to lock the gate. Reports also indicate that armed soldier on sentry duty on the southern side of the prison ignored pleas for protection from the three detainees while they were hacked to death in front of him.

Army personnel and prison staff are also said have failed to take action against a group of civilians who had gathered outside the prison and were throwing stones and other objects into the prison throughout the attack.

Amnesty International noted in its letter that some action was taken by the prison authotities to defuse the situation - such as the swift transfer of most of the Sinhalese convicted prisoners to other prisons Nevertheless, the Human Rights Organisations urges the government to intiate a review of measures to safeguard the security of political prisoner held in the same prisons as common criminal suspects and convicts, albeit in separate wards.

Punish the perpetrators, says T.I.C., London

Tamil Information Centre (720, Thamil House, Romford Road , London E12 6BT) has expressed deep shock and dismay over the killing of the three Tamil detainees.

A Press release issued by the Centre states:

".... In a letter to President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga and Justice Minister G.L.Peiris, the TIC has expressed the view that the incident presents an opportunity for the government to demonstrate to the Tamil people who are struggling for equality and justice, that it is sincere and honest in dealing with human rights abuses and that effective measures are being taken to protect the rights of the Tamil people. The TIC's letter has also stressed that it is important that government measures in this regard are genuine and immediate rather than out of courtesy for the international community ".

In their letter, the Centre has urged the government to initiate a full, impartial public investigation, publish the result of such enquiry and punish the perpetrators of the brutal and inhuman act.

"A flagrant abuse of human rights " -Peace Council

The National Peace Council, Colombo, in a Press statement said it views the killings "as not only a flagrant abuse of human rights of those held in state custody, but also as a grave cause for concern due to its ethnic dimension and the actions of a mob outside the prison."

"The larger context in which these killings have taken place is also significant. There is an increasing sense of frustration in society at the escalating costs of the war in the north-east. ... We are apprehensive that the build-up of pressure, unless speedily speedily checked can lead to a widespread social conflagration .

Kalutara Killings : Paris protest

Tamil Centre for Human Rights, (head quarters in France) held a vigil today, Wednesday 24/12/97 to protest the killing of three Tamil political prisoners in Sri Lanka,states a Press release from that organisation.

Nearly five hundred French and foreign nationals signed a petition on the spot calling upon UN Secretary General, President of France and other world leaders to condemn this killing.

The vigil took place in the French capital Paris at the Human Rights Square which is just in front of Effiel tower. The vigil was held from 3.00 P.M. to 5.00 PM. Even though it was a rainy day, hundreds of Tamils participated in the Vigil. Participants displayed placards condemning the killing. It being Christmas Eve, "Santa Claus. was himself there with a placard saying that "DUE TO WAR, NO X'MAS FOR TAMIL CHILDREN". This placard attracted foreign tourists who have come to visit the Effiel tower.

A CAUSE DE LA GUERRE
N'ONT PAS DE NOËL

LE RACISME
AU SRILANKA

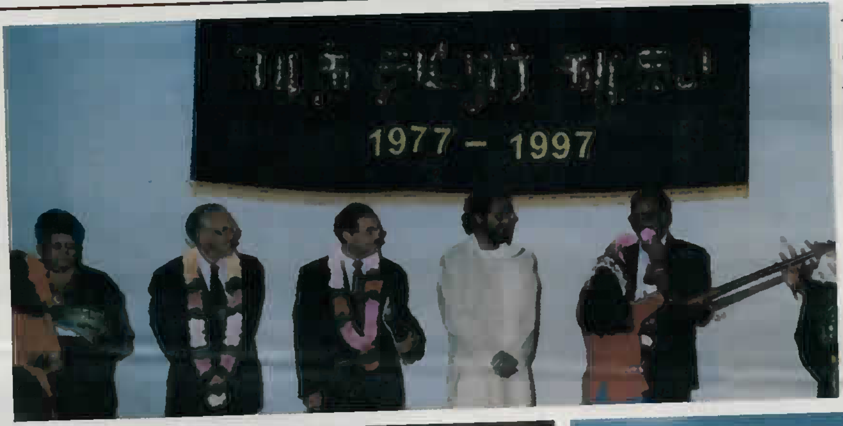
At the end of the vigil, TCHR General Secretary Mr. S. V. Kirubaharan delivered a speech condemning the Sri Lankan government for its human rights violations on the Tamil people. He said that mass human rights violations which had taken place against the people like South Africans, Palestinians, Kurds had been reduced or come to a halt only by alarming the Western governments by those people living abroad.

A leaflet giving fact and figures of the fifteen-year war against the Tamil people in Sri Lanka was distributed to the public.

*****

Twenty years of service in Sydney

Eelam Tamil Association (Australasia), the premier Tamil organisation in Sydney, Australia, recently commemmorated twenty years of service to the Eelam Tamil community and to the greater Tamil national cause.



The occassion was marked by a series of events held in October, including a symposium, cultural events, and an outdoor days of sports and funfair. We present some pictures of the events.

Mr.Paul Zammit, Federal Member of Parliament, chief guest at the Funfair and Sports Day poses with the prize-winning cricket team.

Hon.Marcus Einfeld, Q.C., Justice of the Federal Court and Founder Chairman of Australian Human Rights Commission, speaking as Chief Guest on the second day's proceedings.

Volunteer youth workers for Tamil Rehabilitation Organisation in front of the "TRO Hut" at the Fun Fair.

The winners of the Netball tournament.

The opening ceremony during which the guests of honour were received on stage according to Tamil tradition. (From left to right): Ms.Pearl Wymarra, Director, Wyung Indigenous Australian Education Unit, University of Western Sydney, Hawkesbury (representing indigenous Australians at large), Mr.Colin Gale, Chairman, Darug Aboriginal Corporation, (representing the Darug people, traditional owners of Western Sydney), Mr. Stepan Kerkyasharian, Chairman, Ethnic Affairs Commission of New South Wales (representing the Premier of NSW), Dr.Nadarajah Sriskandarajah, President, Eelam Tamil Association, and Dr.S.Ramdoss, Founder, Paaddaali Makkal Kadchi (PMK), Tamil Nadu, India.

"The Smile of Murugan"

BOOK REVIEW

By Ana Pararajasingham

"The Smile of Murugan" is Michael Wood's account of his South Indian journey by bus from Chidambaram to India's Southernmost tip - Cape Comorin.

This was a trip right across the land described by Marco Polo as the "most splendid province in the world" . In the Author's words "It is the story of a journey through the landscape-physical, mental, imaginal of the Tamil Universe, one of the last - perhaps the last- of the classical civilisations to survive to the end of the twentieth century."

The book, however, is much more than a travel book. In fact, it provides quite a comprehensive portrayal of the history and culture of the Tamils and is devoid of the judgemental tone employed by some westerners when writing about the "third world". On the contrary, the author's approach to the politics, humour and religious beliefs of Tamils, and his admiration for the ancient Tamil culture is refreshing.

Wood's picture is quite the antidote to the censorious account provided V S Naipaul of his travels within India ("India: A Wounded Civilisation" and "India, A Million Mutinies Now") which is replete with cynicism and judgement. Whereas Naipaul's account makes depressing reading despite his brilliant prose, Wood's brilliance lies in his remarkable ability to incorporate discussions on subjects as diverse as history, architecture and religion, within the confines of a travel book. Consider for instance the way in which he describes the temple architecture of the Tamils. This is what he has to say about a temple in Madurai "The temple forms a rectangle about 850¥750 feet on its longest sides, so it is by no means the largest of southern shrines, but inside is the final baroque flowering of the Dravidian style , and whose origins lie in the seventh-century shore temple at Mahabalipuram... Inside you enter a labyrinth of corridors around the shrines, monolithic sculpted granite columns thirty feet high, with huge stepped overhanging brackets to carry the roof, many of the columns highly sculpted into the form of monsters and capped with snapping heads of mythical beasts. Leading off the shrines are many sub-shrines, including the thousand-pillared hall built in 1572 which is no longer used for worship now. About 250 feet square , it has 985 granite pillars brilliantly carved with mythological figures. A wide central nave leads to a shrine of the dancing Siva, with vistas down the full length of the hall."

His grasp of the continuos history that connects the Tamil people of today with those from the classical era shows an amazing insight and understanding. Here is Wood's account of a Vellala (the dominant agricultural caste) household: "Around us the wooden pillars and painted architraves, the photos, the pictures of family gods, conveyed a sense of rootedness in traditional time... They were, one imagined, not so far from the people recorded in the Cholan inscriptions of a thousand years ago on the temple walls, the free peasantry who supported the high culture of the Cholan kingdom in alliance with kings and Brahmins. It was an order which had sustained the south for two thousand years."

Wood also sees the continuity of the ancient culture in the rendering of popular religious songs. These songs, amazingly, retain the immortal tunes handed down over so many centuries. He perceives it in the poetry of the sixth century Tamil saints. These songs, known as Tevarams, are still popular and are sung (and understood) in the original dialect. Wood likens this to the English poetry of the age of Beowulf being still retained as popular fare and to the Hymn of Cademon being as familiar and popular as "Jerusalem."

The book draws attention to the ancient link between the Tamils and the West which preceded the colonial era and was founded on trade. We are informed that Madurai, the Southern city of the Tamils, is one of India's oldest, and is mentioned in Indian and Greek texts. The Greek themselves are referred to as Yavanas, in epic Tamil poems written in the classical period. Hoards of Roman coins have been found all over Tamil Nadu 3/4proof of commercial links between the Roman empire and Tamils. The author traces the Roman connection to trade in spices between the Tamils and the Romans. This, he says, is evident in that some of the words used for "pepper and ginger", are loan words from Tamil which have come into western speech via Greek.

Unlike many westerners, Wood is not easily put off by the exasperating behaviour of the locals and the hardships imposed by a mode of travel rarely undertaken by Westerners. He takes it all in his stride and with great humour. The account of the trip by bus from Chidamaparam is typical of the author's outlook which, no doubt, helped him survive the 2,000 kilometre journey in an old jam-packed bus. As he recounts "...The bus was jam-packed. The organiser, Mr Ramasamy, had a twinkley eye, buck teeth, a big nose and a shock of greying hair, which always stood upon end... 'We have saved you a place of honour' said Mr Ramasamy with grandiloquent gesture towards the front bench seat, right behind the driver. It would have been churlish to say so, but it was not the best place on the bus. There was no leg room and most of the place was already occupied by an extremely fat man who seemed set upon maintaining a vow of silence all the way to Tiruchenur..... The aisles were now filled up and everyone had a seat. Everyone except a tall and gangling priest, who remained perched on the engine box. Raja was a Dikshithar from the temple... Suddenly Raja vaulted with surprising athleticism over the aisle seats and launched himself on top of me. Ours was a seat for three people, not two, he pointed out. Could the fat man and I kindly make room? Clearly five days of this was not going to be the most comfortable ride of my life. Still, we were off on pilgrimage and for everyone else on the bus bodily comfort was the last thing on mind. At least, that's what I kept telling myself...

The book is essential reading for anyone who wishes to explore the world of an ancient people.

("The Smile of Murugan" is published by Penguin Travel)

Profile of an Eelam Tamil achiever

Twenty-one year old Dhananjayan Sriskandarajah, is the toast of Sydney's Tamil community. Dhnanjayan is the first non-native born Australian to bc awarded the prestigious Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford. Past Australian winners of the Rhode Scholarship include two Govemor-Generals, a Prime Minister, the present leader of the opposition and a number of top academics including several Vice Chancellors of Australian universities.

Dhananjayan arrived in Australia at the age of four. He was born in Karainagar. (now under Sri Lankan army occupation) from which his eighty-year old grandmother. his cousins and his aunt were forced to flee in the w-ake of the Sri Lankan amy occupation in 1991.

Dhanajayan's scholarship comes as no surprise to those who have followed this youngster's remarkable achievements over the years. At James Ruse Agricultural High School (one of Sydney's top selective schools), w-here he was an athlete competing in the State athletics championships, and a high academic achiever, Dhanajayan was elected school captain and sports captain in 1992. At Sydney University, active in student politics, he was elected to an unusual tritecta -the Union, the Students' Representative Council and tbe Senate. The election to the Senate was a rare honour in that Dhanajayan w-as elected to represent the 22,000 strong undergraduate population in the University's supreme goveming body.

Dhananjayan (known as "Darny" to his friends) is the son of Drs Nadarajah and Sridevi Sriskamdarajah, both academics and committed Eelam Tamil activists. Nadarajah Sriskandarajah is the President of the Eelam Tamil Association and a member of the Executive Committee of the Australasian h'ederation of 'I'amil Associations. Sridevi Sriskandarajah is the live wire behind the Sydney University Tamil Society. The Society is engaged (among other things) in helping the fundstarved universities in Tamil Eelam-the Tamil Homeland in the island of Sri Lanka through the donation of books, equipment and direct financial assistance.

DHANANJAYAN SRISKANDARAJAH

Social & Personal

Dhananjayam himself is an active member of Tamil yooth organisations and is one of a group of young Eelam Tamils (tertiary students in Aostralian universities) engaged in the study of the ongoing conflict in Sri Lanka.- a conflict which has driven 500,000 Eelam Tamils to flee their homeland.the Tamil cause is very' close to the hearts of these young members of the diaspora.

Dhamanjayan, who considers himself a Tamil Australian, is both proud of his Eelam Tamil heritage amd his Australian nationality. To him these are inseparable.He says, he is 'a truly bi-natianal being". He is very- much the quintessential multiculturalAustralian, equally at home with the wider Australian community and the Eelam Tamil community. "Sri Lanka as a nation-stale has na relevance to me" says Dhamanjayan, who, believes that the Eelam Tamil diaspora's own dignity is closely bound up with the restoration of Eelam Tamil sovereignty in the island of Sri Lanka.

Dhananjayan has just completed his final thesis for his honours degree in economics and is hoping to do his doctora studies in political economics. Not surprisingly, the ~ subject of his thesis reflects his empathy with the developing economies. 'I'he thesis I titled 'Stealing the Thunder" and subtitled "India: Economic l.iberalisation and the Soft Drink Multinationals" is a critical study of the impact of the soft drink multinationals on the Indian soft drink industry. Dhananjayan visited India in the middle of 1997 to research the subject. In 1995/96 he spent sometime in Vietnam on a scholarship awarded by the University of Sydney's Wesley College. The scholarship known as the "Wesley College Overseas Study Program" was to enable students to study and train in Vietnam.

Articulate, intelligent and well spoken, Dhananjayan is an asset to not only Australia and the Austra ian Eelam Tamil community but to the entire I elam Tamil diaspora whose future leadership lies with Dhananjayan's generation.

-Ana Pararajasingham

Iranganie Nicole Perera

The "Ranga Pravesam" (Arangetram) of Iranganie Nicole was held at the Theatre du Gymnase Maria-Bell, Paris 10, on November 9, '97. Iranganie who is of mixed parentage, is the pupil of Thirumathy Kousalya Tharmakulasingam, a graduate in Fine Arts from Jaffna University.

While the "nattuvangam" and dance direction was provided by the teacher herself, Thirumathy Nageswary Brahmananda and Selvi Kumuthini Selvarajah were the vocalists. Thiru K.S.Rajahkumar was on the Mridangam, Thirumathy Lakshmi Jayan on the violin, and Thirumathy Kamala Pathmanathan on Flute.

The programme began with "Mallari" traditionally performed in temple ritual, for which item the Thavil and Nathaswaram were played by Thiru S.Ramachandran and Thiru M.Ravindrarajah.

Iranganie Nicole Perera seen with her teacher

Bharata Natyam in Paris

Jeyeitha Nagarasa

Selvi Jeyeitha (right) and also pictured with the music troupe

The Bharata Natya arangetram of Selvi Jeyeitha Nagarasa took place in Paris recently. Selvi Jeyeitha is a pupil of Selvi Jeeva Thirunavukkarasu at the "Centre Parisien D'Education Pour Les Tamous"

Jeyeitha's recital consisted of a novel repertoire with musical support provided by an Indian troupe of musicians. While the teacher Selvi Jeeva herself did the "Nattuvangam", the following provided the musical accompaniments: Vocal: Thirumathy Ranganayaki Rajan and Selvi Sathiathevy Thirunavukarasu; Mridanggam: Thiru Girithar; Violin: Thiru Thevarajah Mailvaganam; Flute: Thiru Vala Sankara; Ganjira: Thiru Gurumurth; Morsing: Thiru Bala Venkatesh; Ghatam: Thiru Arun Sukumar.

Social & Personal

Mirudhanga Arangetram

Barathan Balayogan, son of Mr & Mrs. Balayogan of Eastham, London, and disciple of "Nathamani" Muthu Sivarajah had his Mirudhanga arangetram at Waltham Forest Theatre recently, with veteran vocalist Ambika Thamotheram leading him through a variety of thala-impregnated pieces.

Barathan rendered his solo (Thani avarathanam) with its rhythmic complexities with accuracy. Barathan had also his veena training under the reputed musician Arunthathy Sriskandarajah, who was present on the occasion as guest of honour

Accompanying Barathan were Gnanambikai Pathmasikamani on the violin, Siva Visakan on the Ganjira, A.Gananathan on the Ghatam, and K.Sithamparanathan on the Morsing.

Music enthusiast Dr. K. Ambikapathy, who was the chief guest paid a tribute to Barathan's guru Muthu Sivarajah for his ability to fathom the capacity of his several students and guide them to achieve their potential.

Table Tennis star in Australia

Thirteen-year-old Kamalesh Tharmasuthan is one of the leading junior table tennis players in Australia. He won two gold medals, one silver medal and a bronze medal in the 1997 Australian National Junior Table Tennis Championships held recently in Melbourne.

He started playing Table Tennis in 1992, when he was eight years old. Since 1994 he had won many Victorian Junior Championships including this year's Victorian State Junior TT championship in the under 14 Boys' singles. His consistent performance has enabled him to maintain his No. I ranking in Victoria for the last four years and is a regular member of the Victorian state junior teams in his age group.

In June this year he was selected to attend a high performance coaching project in Adelaide, jointly organised by the international Table Tennis Federation and Table Tennis Australia. This program was aimed at the elite Juniors (under/17yrs) from Australia, New Zealand and other neighbouring countries and run by a French coach who coached the 1993 world champion, J.P.Gatien. Kamalesh was the youngest player invited to attend this training camp. He also attended Table Tennis Australia's Olympic Talent identification Camp held in July 1997.

Kamalesh trains for about 10 - 12 hours a week and his Coach Hua Jie Yang, is a former top class chinese player. His training includes sessions with the Victorian State Junior Academy, his elder brother Priyesh (a member of the Victorian state junior team), and his father Tharmasuthan, a former Jaffna Open Mens' Singles champion during his student days at Jaffna College.

Kamalesh is also very keen in his studies and in 1995 won a scholarship to Haileybury College, a private school in Victoria.

Music of three traditions

The London Veena Group presented music of three traditions at Merton Hall,South Wimbledon, London on 8 November, featuring Arunthathy Sriskandarajah on the Veena, Stewart Cartis in Jewish Folk Music and Los Serrano in Flamenco Music & Dance. An added feature in this multi-cultural music programme was the poetry rendering of poet and councillor Patric Cunnane of a translated Tamil poem by poet S.Nagendran to mark the European Year (1997) against Racism.

Photograph shows Arunthathy on the Veena flanked by Anita Shanmugathasan (left) and Sharmini Rajagopal (right). Muthu Sivarajah is on the Mirudhangam.

Obituaries

John Rasiah Gnanaratnam

John Rasiah Gnanaratnam passed away in London on 24 November '97 and the funeral took place on 5 December.

Mr.Gnanaratnam who was 77, was the son of the late Rasiah Pakianathan Gnanaratnam of Eralalai, Ch unnakam, Jaffna and Alice Joseph and was born at Talawakelle on 4 December 1919.

He was educated at Hartley College, Point Pedro and St.Henry's, Ilavalai. He joined the British Army in 1941 and served until 1946 in North Africa, Italy and Palestine. On return to Ceylon, he joined Dunlops in Colombo. He married Cecile Frugtniet, and has two sons, Jayam and Kumar.

He has been living in London since 1954, and retired from the Camden Borough Council in 1985. At the time of his death, he was an active member of the International Tamil Foundation.

* * * * *

Mrs.Rasaledchmy Cumaraswamy

Mrs.Rasaledchmy, wife of the late Sampanthar Cumaraswamy passed away in London on 21 November, 1997. The last religious rites were performed at 76 Windermere Avenue, South Kenton, Middx. HA9 8RY on Saturday 22nd November 1997. Cremation took place at Golders Green the same day.

Mrs.Rasaledchmy leaves her sons and daughters Vamadeva, Thevi, Mahadeva (Canada), Jayadeva, Karunasaladeva (Australia), Thevaki and Vasudeva and sons-in-law and daughters-in-law Malathy, Selvaratnam, Susi, Thevaki, Lojana, Jogarajah and Ruby.

Tel: Selvaratnam- 0181 908 6993

* * * * *

Mrs.Pavalarathinam Sandrasegaram

Born: 12 October 1919
Died: 22 November 1997

Thiviamalar Thamotheram (Mrs.C.J.T.Thamotheram) writes:A few lines about my dear friend Pavalam. Just as her name signifies, she was indeed a special jewel. She was a cultured lady, an ex-teacher (at Drieberg College for many years), very simple in her ways and a lovable person. She was really glad that last year she had visited her three children in Australia and proudly showed me the photos that were taken there.

She and I were of the same age, married the same year, and had large families. We chatted away for long hours. When I met her for the last time, she was happy and contented, as she was recovering from her illness. I was hoping to meet her on Sunday 23 November and when I phoned her daughter, Raji, living nearby, I was terribly shocked to hear that Pavalam died peacefully in herher sleep the previous morning. Pavalam's wish has been grante just as she told me a few times. God has blessed her abundantly. May her lovely soul rest in peace.

Mrs.Pavalam Sandrasegaram leaves behind five daughters.

* * * * *

Mrs.Thanalakshume Thuraisingam

Born: 29.6.1936 Died: 24.11.1997

The funeral was held on 27 November 1997 in Manor Park ,London, of Mrs.Thanalakshume, wife of the late Thuraisingam, (Teacher, Jaffna Hindu College), mother of Kajenthira (Canada), Kausala, Vathsala and Kajani (London) and mother-in-law of Shiralini, Daniel Jeyaraj ah, Sri Ravindra and Subenthiran.

Mrs.Thanalashume was the sister of the late Selvarajah, late Dr.Koneswaramoorthy, late Balasubramaniam, Dharmadevi, Vivekananda, Mahadeva and Arunthathy.

A resident of Kondavil, Jaffna, the deceased was retired Principal of Jaffna Nurses Training School, and later Education Convenor of Sathya Sai Spiritual Education at the Manor Park Sai Centre.

(Information given by daughter Kajani. Tel: 0181- 550 9153.)

* * * * *

Kanmani Thiagaraja

Kanmani, wife of V.Thiagaraja (formerly of Mahajana College, Tellippalai), mother of Sriskantharaja, Rajani, and Rajabhavani, mother-in-law of Gnanapoongothai, Rajalingam (USA) and Nadarajalingam, eldest sister of Saraswathy Arumugarajah (Canada) Parameswary Satchithanantham (Sri Lanka), Late Kanthasamy (TRRO, Saturday Review, Tamil Information Centre), Parameswaran (Sydney), Late Gnanambikai, Mangayatkarasi Dharmarajah (Canada). Died on September 11, 1997 and the funeral took place on the 13th in Melbourne.

Apt.15, Harris Crescent, Glenwaverly,
Victoria 3150, Australia.

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Proprietors
B. Nimalraj
B. Kamalraj

Defiance at Delhi

Delegates from

other countries

were presented

with mementos.

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